# DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 115 PS 026 823

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Bacon, Linda; Chovelak, Cynthia; Wanic, Amy |
| TITLE | Instructional Techniques To Improve Homework Completion with Sixth Grade and Spanish I Students. |
| PUB DATE | 1998-05-00 |
| NOTE | 146p.; Master's Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and IRI/Skylight Field-Based Masters Program. |
| PUB TYPE | Dissertations/Theses (040) -- Reports - Evaluative (142) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC06 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Action Research; *Assignments; *Change Strategies; *Cooperative Learning; Elementary School Students; Grade 6; High School Students; High Schools; *Homework; Intermediate Grades; Metacognition; Middle Schools; *Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Parents; Program Effectiveness; Student Attitudes; *Student Improvement; Student Motivation |
| IDENTIFIERS | Middle School Students; Teacher Journals |

ABSTRACT

Problems in students completing homework may be related to lack of parental involvement and support, student attitudes and priorities, and the assigning of inappropriate and irrelevant homework. This action research project implemented and examined the effectiveness of increased communication with parents regarding homework, cooperative learning incorporating metacognitive processes, and modification of homework assignments to increase homework completion rates. Participating were 111 sixth graders in middle school or elementary schools and 22 first year Spanish high school students in a midwestern metropolitan area. The problem of insufficient homework completion was documented by means of student and teacher surveys, teacher interviews, and examination of grade books. The intervention consisted of: (1) increasing communication with parents regarding homework policies and parent involvement with homework; (2) incorporating cooperative learning activities such as homework support base groups; and (3) evaluating and designing homework assignments to better meet student individual needs, learning styles, and curricular objectives. The effects of the intervention were assessed by means of student and parent surveys given on a pre-post basis, a record of parent notifications of late homework, and weekly teacher journal entries. Post intervention data indicated that homework completion increased in the elementary and middle school settings but showed no significant improvement at the high school site. Cooperative learning with metacognitive processing and modification of homework assignments were effective in improving the quantity and quality of homework completion. However, increased communication with parents did not result in increased parental involvement nor influence homework completion. (Appendices include data collection forms and sample instructional materials. Contains 44 references.) (KB)

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# INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE HOMEWORK COMPLETION WITH SIXTH GRADE AND SPANISH I STUDENTS

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Masters Program
Chicago, Illinois
May, 1998

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# ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for improving student homework completion. The targeted population consists of sixth grade students in a middle school and elementary school setting and first year Spanish students in a high school setting in a Midwestern metropolitan area. The problem of insufficient homework completion was documented through data which included surveys of students and teachers, as well as teacher interviews and teachers' grade books.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that a lack of parental involvement and support, student attitudes and priorities, and inappropriate and irrelevant homework seemed to contribute to the problem. A recent literature review showed a wide range of views on homework. However, parental involvement, student attitudes, and inappropriate assignments were all agreed upon as contributing factors to the problem.

A review of solution strategies by educators and psychologists, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention. Increased written and oral communication with parents regarding homework, inclusion of cooperative learning with metacognitive processing, and analysis and modification of homework were implemented.

Post intervention data indicated that homework completion increased in the elementary and middle school settings but showed no significant improvement at the high school site. An analysis of the data to determine the success of each of the interventions indicated that the inclusion of cooperative learning with metacognitive processing and modification of homework assignments did have a positive affect on the quantity and quality of homework completion. However, increased communication with parents did not seem to result in increased parental involvement or have any noticeable affect on improving homework completion.

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# CHAPTER 1

## PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

### General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted two sixth grade classes and one high school first-year Spanish class demonstrate insufficient homework completion which affects academic performance. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes student, parent, and teacher surveys as well as late homework parent notification slips.

### Immediate Problem Context

Site A is located in a new, rapidly growing, Midwestern metropolitan area. It has a total enrollment of 1135 students. The ethnic characteristics are 68.8% White, 9.5% Black, 4.1% Hispanic, 4.5% Asian /Pacific Islander, and 13.2% Native American. The population of Site A comes from three elementary schools. There are 1.8% low-income and 1.4% limited-English-proficient students. The attendance rate is 95.4% with a student mobility rate of 14.0%. Chronic truancy is 0.9% with ten students at Site A being chronically truant (State Report Card, Site A, 1997).

There is an average class size of 30.1 students at Site A. Students receive 39 minutes of mathematics, 39 minutes of science, 78 minutes of English, and 39 minutes of social science instruction per day (State Report Card, Site A, 1997).

There is a total of 869 teachers in the district. Of these, 20.2% are male and 79.8% are female. There are 96.8% White, 1.8% Black, 0.5% Hispanic, 0.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% Native American teachers. The average teaching experience in the district is 9.0 years. Teachers with a Bachelor's Degree make up 57.4% of the population while teachers with a Master's Degree and above are 42.6%. With a district enrollment of 15,611, the pupil-teacher ratio in the elementary schools is 20.7:1 and the pupil-administrative ratio is 416.3:1. In this district, the average teacher's salary is $38,551, administrator's salary is $78,991, and operating expenditure per pupil is $5,622 (State Report Card, Site A, 1997).

Site B is located in an older, established, Midwestern metropolitan area. It has a total enrollment of 372 students with the following ethnic characteristics: 97.8% White, 0.5% Black, 0.8% Hispanic, 0.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, and no Native Americans. Of the student population, 0.8% are low-income and 0.8% are limited-English-proficient. Site B has a student attendance ratio of 96.2% with a student mobility of 2.4% and no chronic truants. The pupil-teacher ratio is 20.7:1. The targeted class is comprised of 27 students compared to the school average of 23 students per classroom. The average sixth grade instructional day includes 50 minutes of mathematics, 120 minutes of English/Language Arts, and 45 minutes each of social science and science (State Report Card, Site B, 1997).

As in the case of the students, Site B's teachers come from a homogeneous ethnic background. Of the 285 teachers in the district, 98.2% are White, while only 0.4% are Black, 1.4% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and no teachers are Hispanic or Native American. The gender balance is also seemingly skewed with only 12.7% male teachers and 87.3% female. The average teaching experience in the district is 15.1 years with 63.8% of the teachers having a Master's Degree or higher and 36.2% with a Bachelor's Degree. The average teacher's salary of $47,928 reflects a salary scale indexed to favor teachers with a Master's Degree. The district spends $5,658 per pupil for operating expenditures (State Report Card, Site B, 1997).

Site C is also located in an established, Midwestern metropolitan area. There are four schools in the district: two elementary, one junior high, and one high school. Site C's population comes from the high school which has a total enrollment of 565 students with an average class size of 19.5 pupils. The high school's ethnic characteristics are as follows: 86.7% of the students are White, 6.4% Black, 4.8% Hispanic, 2.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and no Native Americans. Of the student population, 7.6% come from low-income families, 1.2% are limited-English-proficient, and 4.6% are dropouts. At Site C the attendance rate is 92.5%, the student mobility is 13.8%, the chronic truancy is 0.7%, and the number of chronic truants is four (State Report Card, Site C, 1997).

There are 108 teachers in the district. Like the student population, the racial/ethnic backgrounds of the teachers are also quite uniform: 99.1% White, 0.9% Black, and no Hispanic, Asian Pacific/Islander, and Native American. Male teachers comprise 27.6% of the teachers while females make up 72.4%. The average teaching experience in the district is 13.8 years. Of these teachers, 52.8% have a Bachelor's Degree and 47.2% have a Master's Degree. At the secondary level, the pupil-teacher ratio is 18.5:1 and the pupil-administration ratio is 185.4:1. The financial indicators for the district include an average teacher's salary of $50,705, an average administrator's salary of $81,738, and an operating expenditure of $7,331 per pupil (State Report Card, Site C, 1997).

The middle school at Site A is only five years old, opening in the Fall of 1993. It is a two-story building capable of housing 1,050 students. There are four computer laboratories in the building: two of them are fully equipped; one room has lap top computers only; an additional room has some older computers available. There is a computer in each of the 40 classrooms and in each team office. All classrooms are networked and have internet access. In addition to the 40 regular classrooms, there is an art room, a home economics room, a shop, two gymnasiums, and five fully equipped science laboratories (Principal, personal communication, September, 1997).

Site B was built in 1952 as a kindergarten through fourth grade elementary school. In 1959, the school added fifth and sixth grade classes. There have been three different additions to the original facility, including one in 1989 and another in 1993. A final addition is still under construction to add a classroom for the learning disabled teacher and specialists such as speech and hearing, social work, and psychologist. Site B currently has 16 self-contained classrooms, a Learning Resource Center, one LD Resource room, an activity room for art and music classes, and 2 small rooms for the speech therapist and social worker. Each classroom has a phone and three computers. In 1998 the building is scheduled to be networked and have internet access for each classroom. Presently, only the Learning Resource Center has internet connection (School Directory, Site B, 1996).

Site C is the smallest public high school in the county with a capacity of approximately 650 students. Although the school is not to the point of being overcrowded, there is a need to carefully coordinate classes, events, and activities to efficiently use the space available. Site C was constructed in 1974. Prior to that date, the high school classes met in the current junior high school building. Even today, the high school frequently uses the junior high school's auditorium, football field, outdoor track, and gymnasium for a variety of events. There are many advances in computer technology throughout the facility. Each classroom is networked and has internet access. Site C has two computer laboratories: one is a writing laboratory and the other is for internet use. In 1995 a technology center was added. Throughout the building, Site C is equipped with science laboratories and audio-visual equipment. Because the building was constructed in the 1970s, it reflects one of the trademark architectural features of that era: no classroom windows. As a result of this feature, the building requires a continuous heating and cooling system for proper air circulation. Despite many efforts over the years, the maintenance staff has been unable to maintain a comfortable, uniform temperature throughout the building (Principal, personal communication, September, 1997).

## Schools' Programs

Site A is a middle school containing sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Sixth grade students are grouped in teams of approximately 90 students with three core teachers and four to five encore teachers. There are four sixth grade teams. One team is composed of students with low reading ability (reading center). Accelerated math students with regular education students are a part of the second team. Learning disabled (LD) and behavioral disordered (BD) inclusion students are an integral part of the third team. The remaining students comprise the fourth team which is the targeted population for this research study. Students in the targeted sixth grade science classes meet daily and are given homework at least three or four days per week. Homework assignments include worksheets, completion of laboratory reports, and projects (Principal, personal communication, September, 1997).

Site B is a K through 6 elementary school. There are 54 sixth grade students divided into two separate classrooms. Team teaching is done only for the unit studies of social studies and science. Therefore, students have the same teacher for all but 45 minutes per day with three 30 minute periods per week of special instruction such as music and physical education. All instructional grouping is heterogeneous except for a small group of special education students in mathematics. The social worker is on site only one and one-half days per week. There are two resource teachers for LD and BD students at the site. One of the these is full time, the other is three-fifths time. Inclusion is on a case-by-case basis, but mainstreaming is the preferred placement if at all possible. Aide assignment with inclusion students is also decided per case and not automatically. Homework assignments are a part of the grading in every academic subject, but homework is not assigned in every subject every day. In the targeted classroom, mathematics has the most homework with a daily assignment and an additional 10 minutes of math fact practice nightly. Mathematics homework is 30% of the total mathematics grade. There is a homework policy for grades four through six in place at the site (Principal, personal communication, September, 1997).

At Site C, the high school foreign language department offers four years of both French and Spanish. These classes are not required for graduation but are instead elective classes. All classes meet 50 minutes per day, 5 days per week, and usually have homework assigned each day. This homework includes written assignments, memorization of vocabulary words, and preparing for a quiz or test. Although foreign language is not a graduation requirement, college-bound students usually complete two years of the same foreign language. Upon graduating from high school, 49.5% of Site C's high school students attend a full-time college or university and 35.1% attend a full-time community college (State Report Card, Site C, 1996).

## The Surrounding Community

According to the 1990 census, the total population of Site A was 99,581 which was a 22% increase from 1980. The estimated total population by 1996 was 117,372, or an 18% increase in just six years. These numbers indicate the rapid growth in this community. With 20.6% of the population aged 5 to 17, the demand for more schools is essential. Site A was filled to capacity in just three years since its construction.

Growth is the prime concern in this school district. In 1996, the total enrollment was approximately 14,000 with an expected increase of 1,500 to 2,000 students per year for the next several years. In the past two years, a new high school, middle school, and four elementary schools have been constructed. With the successful passage of a 1997 referendum, two additional middle schools and six elementary schools will be under construction. There are also plans to purchase two more middle school sites. This community is reported to have the fastest growing school district in the state.

According to the Winter 1997 district newsletter, an increase in the acquisition and application of technology is a major goal of the district. The 1994 referendum included $5,000,000 for technology. The 1997 referendum proposed that an additional $8,000,000 be spent on technological improvements throughout the district. Site A is very technologically oriented. Grades are all done on computer, every teacher has a computer in their classroom, and all computers are hooked to the internet. The emphasis is on using this new technology of computers, LCD panels, internet, scope cam, and homework hotline to enhance the educational climate of the classroom.

The population of the community consists of 11.4% Black, 0.2% American Indian, 1.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 12.4% other, and 73.4% White. Of the white population, 22.6% are of Hispanic origin. This large Black and Hispanic population contributes significantly to the cultural diversity of the school (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

The total mean household income is $39,078 with 72.6% of the population earning $49,000 and lower. There is a significant number of households (11.2%) with incomes less than $10,000. Along with the decreased income comes an increase in the number of housing units that are rented. Of the occupied housing units, 61.5% are owner occupied and 38.5% are renter occupied. The median home value is $81,400 (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

Of the employed labor force of 16 years and older, 21.6% have managerial and/or professional occupations, 31.6% have technical, sales, and/or administrative support positions, and 28.4% are employed in manufacturing industries. This employment breakdown is consistent with the fact that only 11.8% have attained a Bachelor's degree (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

As of the latest census, Site B has a population of 46,858 with a median age of 34.6 years. The racial breakdown is 91.2% White (non-Hispanic), 2.0% White (Hispanic), 1.6% Black, 0.1% American Indian, 4.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.8% Other. Of the total population, 25% are children aged 17 years and younger while 17.5% are 55 years of age and older (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

The family structure, like the community itself, is very traditional. There are 12,905 family households in the community. Of these, 11,452 or 88.8% have children under the age of 18. The majority of these children (92.6%) live in two-parent families with 6% living with their mothers only and 1.4% living with fathers as the single parent (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

The employment data correlates with a seemingly high degree of education in the community at large. Of the people 25 years of age and older, 68.8% have completed some college while 46.7% have an Associate's, Bachelor's, or graduate degree. It is thus not surprising that 67.4% of the employed persons 16 years of age or older are employed either in managerial or professional/specialty occupations (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

The total mean income for all households is $55,424. Families are slightly higher at $64,409. This difference could be attributed to the fact that 48.5% of the large percentage of two-parent families identified previously had both parents employed. A further analysis of income is even more revealing. The mean income of households earning less than $150,000 per year is $50,278 while the mean for those earning more than $150,000 is $244,728. The same discrepancy is apparent in families as well with mean incomes of $58,066 and $240,388 respectively. Therefore, the median income is a more representative figure than the mean. The median income for all households is $48,266 while that for just families is $56,055. A small, but significant, percentage of families (5.3%) has an annual income of less than $20,000. The number of children 17 years of age and younger living below the poverty level is 301, or 10.8% of the total children in that age group (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

The housing data supports that the community is an older, well established one. Of the occupied housing units, 78.5% are owner occupied while 21.5% are renter occupied. At the time of the census, 53.9% of the total population had been living in the same residence for at least five years. The majority of the housing units (66.2%) are single family, detached structures. An additional 5.5% are single family, attached dwellings. A fairly large 34.8% of the housing structures were built prior to 1960. The mean value for owner occupied housing units is $155,733 while the median value is $143,900 with 97% of the units having a value of $75,000 or above (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

There are two public school districts in the community. Site B's district, which includes 10 elementary schools and 2 middle schools, is much larger than the other district. There has been a recent attempt to dissolve the second, smaller district and incorporate it into Site B's. Although the attempt failed, there is an expectation by the superintendent that eventually the two districts will unite. The high school district is a separate district from the elementary.

In spite of the sociological and economic indicators listed previously, the community has been very resistant to any educational referendums. According to the Secretary to the Superintendent (personal communication, August, 1997), since 1968 the elementary district has initiated six referendums with only two passing by very narrow margins. The high school district has initiated five referendums and had success with only two, including a defeat this last spring by almost a two-to-one margin. No high school district referendum has passed since 1972.

According to the New Residents' Guide (1996), Site C is a small community that has extensive wooded areas, takes pride in its annual festivals, and has a history dating back to 1832. The community offers both public and private education. In the public school realm, the community has a small, K-12 unit school district which includes two elementary schools, one junior high school, and one high school. Currently, this school district is very involved in a three year technology plan designed to educate the teachers and to increase the use of technology throughout the curricula (Principal, personal communication, September, 1997).

The population of the community is 19,512. Of the total population, 24.5% are under age 18, 4.9% are age 18-21, 55.5% are age 22-49, and 14.9% are age 50 and over. The ethnic background of the community is very homogenous. The characteristics are as follows: 90.6% White, 2.8% Black, 0.2% American Indian, 5.7% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 0.8% Other. Therefore, it appears that approximately one-fourth of the population represents school aged children having a white, ethnic background (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

In this community, there are 4,881 family households. These households seem to have an almost equal distribution of those with children under the age of 18 (2,582 or 52.9%) as opposed to those without children (2,299 or 47.1%). Of those households having children, 88% of these children live with both parents while 11.5% come from a single-parent home. Of the 11.5%, 1.7% of the children live with just their father while 9.8% live only with their mother (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

By examining the category of people over age 25, one can also see the high amount of education within the community. The following figures appear to show that the majority of these people have pursued their education beyond the high school level: 21.1% have some college but no degree, 5.2% have an Associate's degree, 32.5% have attained a Bachelor's degree, and 7.2% have earned a graduate or professional degree. The occupations of employed persons 16 years of age or older seem to parallel the educational profile of the community. Within this age group, 42.6% have executive, administrative, or managerial occupations while 30.9% have positions in sales or administrative support. While commuting to their place of employment, 84.8% drive whereas 8.8% profit from the proximity of a downtown train station (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

As of the last census, the median household income is $49,712 while the median family income is $60,009. Of the families within the community, 31.9% earn between $60,000 and $99,000 while only 2.8% of the population have an annual income below the poverty level (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

This community has a variety of types of housing including single family homes, condominiums, and apartments. According to the housing statistics, there is a total of 8,338 housing units. Of the occupied housing units, 53.3% are owner occupied while 46.7% are occupied by a renter. Of the owner occupied housing units, 85.5% are detached, single family homes. The majority (75.6%) of the housing units were built within the last twenty years prior to the census: 20.1% during 1985-1988, 15.9% during 1980-1984, and 39.6% during 1970-1979. The median year for construction is 1977. In addition, only 14. 6% of households have occupied a housing unit in this community prior to 1980 (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990). As cited by the New Residents' Guide (1996), single family residences range in value from a starter home costing $110,000 to an executive estate pricing out at $1,000,000. The median value of owner occupied housing units is $163,100 while at the same time 29.6% of the housing units have a value of $200,000 or above (U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990).

## National Context of the Problem

The issue of homework has been one of national interest and concern throughout the 20th century (Cooper, 1989). Even as early as the late 19th century, the debate over homework initiated several experimental research studies (Vratania, 1988). The belief that homework is a positive and integral part of the learning process is really in its "third renaissance" (Cooper, 1989, p. 85). Like many educational topics, homework has had several cycles of popularity and disfavor. In the early 1900s, the theory that the mind was a muscle that needed to be exercised was prevalent. One of the most popular exercises for the mind was memorization of large amounts of information which could be easily and efficiently assigned as homework. The Great Depression and World War II shifted the emphasis in education from rote memorization to problem solving. With this shift, homework fell into disrepute. In the 1950s with the launch of Sputnik and the race for space, homework was seen as a way to catch up with the Soviet Union and accelerate the acquisition of important knowledge. During the civil unrest of the 1960s with frequent protests and antiestablishment activities, homework was out of favor again as an instructional tool. However, in 1983 with the release of the national report *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) homework came to prominence once again (Cooper, 1989; Vratania, 1988).

More than any other educational issue, homework encompasses all aspects of education: students, family, teachers, curriculum decisions, and administrative policies (Cooper, 1989).

As Marino states, "Homework ought to be considered a major issue *because of its every-day-ness*" (Marino, 1993, p. 70). Since homework touches so many different aspects of the learning experience, it is not remarkable that it has sparked continual controversy and debate. Homework has been purported to have numerous positive effects including increased academic achievement as well as improved student attitudes and study skills (Cooper, 1989). Nevertheless, as early as 1913 *The Ladies Home Journal* considered that homework was unwholesome and detrimental (Vratania, 1988). Educators have asserted that homework actually encourages cheating and results in negative attitudes about school (Cooper, 1989). Studies have been conducted throughout the 20th century with mixed results. In his survey of homework studies conducted since 1962, Cooper (1989) stated that 70% had positive results for homework. In their extensive research study, Foyle and Bailey (1985) found a significant difference in achievement for those groups of students that had homework versus those that did not. In comparison, other experts have found just the opposite results. Barber (1985, p. 55) concludes that, "Research does not show that homework raises achievement scores or invigorates apathetic learners." Black, in her study of New York high school students, asserts that even though students spend the average of a "sixth day" (Black, 1996, p. 50) on homework per week there is no real gain in achievement. It seems that for every study that takes a positive stance for homework, a corresponding negative study can be cited.

It is obvious that more research is needed about this important instructional tool of homework. In its 1986 report, *What Works*, the U.S. Department of Education emphasized the need for caution in summarizing the effects of homework because of the inconclusive nature of many studies (Earle, 1992). Several experts have done meta-analyses of the large base of research and studies on homework. Most have stated that definitive answers about the usefulness of homework are not contained in the body of current research (Earle, 1992; Freisen, 1979; Otto, 1985). Cooper (1989) goes so far as to state that many of the previous studies have serious flaws and that results have been manipulated to support the desired position of the researcher. Goldstein (1960) discovered that out of 280 references to homework found in the *Education Index*, only 17 discussed original research. Of the 17 studies cited, 9 had mixed results regarding homework and its relationship to academic achievement. According to Ziegler, during the 1980s several international studies were conducted to compare achievement and homework. As in the U.S. studies, the findings were inconsistent. Ziegler asserts, "educational researchers can take some limited pride in knowing better in 1990 than they did in 1980 what they do not know about homework" (Ziegler, 1992, p. 604). Otto supports this view as he states, "All things considered, the homework issue has yet to be resolved" (Otto, 1985, p. 766).

# CHAPTER 2

## PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

### Problem Evidence

In order to document the problem of incomplete homework assignments, student and parent surveys were developed and distributed. In addition, teachers were surveyed and interviewed regarding the extent of the problem and prior strategies utilized. Finally, a record of actual late assignments from the teachers' grade books was tabulated for a three week period at the beginning of the school year.

At the three sites, a total of 133 students were involved in the research project. Student, parent, and teacher surveys (Appendices B, C, and D) as well as late homework parent notification slips (Appendix E) were developed by the researchers to aid in the recording process. Surveys were administered during September of 1997. At Site A 84 students and parents and 100 teachers received surveys. At Site B, 27 students and their parents were surveyed. No teachers were surveyed, but two teachers were interviewed (Appendix F). At Site C, 22 students and parents were surveyed as well as 30 teachers. Complete results from these surveys are shown in Appendices B, C, and D. For purpose of analysis, relevant questions from each survey will be considered by topic. A summary of responses to Student Homework Survey Question 11 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Survey Responses to Question 11-How Often Do You Complete All of Your Homework?

| Site | No. of Responses | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 81 | 64 (79%) | 14 (17%) | 3 (4%) | 0 (0%) |
| B | 27 | 17 (63%) | 7 (26%) | 3 (11%) | 0 (0%) |
| C | 22 | 12 (55%) | 8 (36%) | 2 (9%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total | 130 | 93 (72%) | 29 (22%) | 8 (6%) | 0 (0%) |

According to the data as presented in Table 1, 93 out of the 130 or 72% of the students who responded to the question stated they almost always complete all of their homework. Over one-fourth, or 28% of the students, indicated that they either only often or seldom complete all of their homework. A further analysis indicates that all three sites have approximately the same percentage of students with incomplete homework. However, Site C has the smallest percentage (55%) of the students who state they almost always complete all of their homework while Site A has the largest (79%).

In addition to surveying the students involved in the study, surveys for teachers at Site A and Site C were developed and distributed (Appendix D). Table 2 summarizes the responses to Question 6. Of the 57 teachers who responded to the survey, 85% indicated that a lack of homework completion was a problem in their classes, with 19% indicating that it was a major problem. It is important to note that at Site A all teachers were surveyed including those teaching physical education, art, shop, and home economics who do not routinely include homework assignments in their curriculum. At Site C only teachers who teach traditional academic subjects were surveyed.

Table 2

Teacher Responses to Question 6-Do You See Lack of Homework Completion as a Problem?

| Site | No. of Responses | Major Problem | Minor Problem | No Problem |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 34 | 6 (18%) | 25 (74%) | 3 (9%) |
| C | 23 | 5 (22%) | 18 (78%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total | 57 | 11 (19%) | 43 (76%) | 3 (5%) |

At Site B, a K-6 elementary school, only the teachers in grades four through six assign homework regularly. Since there were only five teachers to survey at the site, the researcher at Site B instead conducted an in-depth interview with the two fifth grade teachers in order to collect data on the current students involved in the research study (Appendix F). Both teachers stated that homework completion was a major problem for them. The teachers indicated that between six and eight students per day, or approximately 20% to 25% of the class, had late or missing assignments.

Direct evidence of the problem was also collected by tabulating actual late assignments by the targeted groups for a three week period in September. The number of late homework parent notification slips for each student was recorded in the teachers' grade books. Table 3 presents the number of students per day with late homework assignments. Of the 133 students monitored, an average of 22 or 17% had late homework assignments each day. Site B had the largest average with 5 students or 19% per day. Site A had the next largest average of 15 students (18%) with late assignments per day. Site C, the high school Spanish class, had an average of 2 students or 9% per day with late assignments. It is important to note that because this is a first year Spanish class, assignments at the beginning of the year are usually short, objective assignments.

Table 3

Number of Students per Day with Late Homework Assignments

| | Number of Students with Late Homework Assignments | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day | Site A 84 Students | Site B 27 students | Site C 22 students | Total 133 students |
| 1 | 7 (8%) | 4 (15%) | 3 (14%) | 14 (11%) |
| 2 | 11 (13%) | 3 (11%) | 1 (5%) | 15 (11%) |
| 3 | 9 (11%) | 7 (26%) | 3 (14%) | 19 (14%) |
| 4 | 25 (30%) | 5 (19%) | 1 (5%) | 31 (23%) |
| 5 | 13 (15%) | 6 (22%) | 0 (0%) | 19 (14%) |
| 6 | 7 (8%) | 6 (22%) | 2 (9%) | 15 (11%) |
| 7 | 7 (8%) | 3 (11%) | 6 (22%) | 16 (12%) |
| 8 | 15 (18%) | 2 (7%) | 1 (5%) | 18 (14%) |
| 9 | 16 (19%) | 6 (22%) | 4 (18%) | 26 (12%) |
| 10 | 39 (46%) | 9 (33%) | 5 (23%) | 53 (40%) |
| 11 | 7 (8%) | 3 (11%) | 2 (9%) | 12 (9%) |
| 12 | 15 (18%) | 4 (15%) | 0 (0%) | 19 (14%) |
| 13 | 37 (44%) | 5 (19%) | 2 (9%) | 44 (33%) |
| 14 | 9 (11%) | 4 (15%) | 2 (9%) | 15 (11%) |
| 15 | 10 (12%) | 4 (15%) | 2 (9%) | 16 (12%) |
| Average | 15 (18%) | 5 (19%) | 2 (9%) | 22 (17%) |

# Probable Causes

## Site Based

Because of the complexity of the factors that are involved in homework completion (teachers, students, parents, administrators, extracurricular commitments, etc.), the researchers developed and distributed student, parent, and teacher surveys in order to probe the causes affecting homework completion at the targeted sites (Appendices B, C and D). Initially, the researchers gathered general data as to the amount of homework assigned. A summary of the data from questions 1 and 2 of the survey is presented in table 4.

Table 4

Results of Student Homework Survey Questions 1 and 2

1. How much time per night do you spend on homework?

| | Less than 1/2 hour | 1/2 to 1 hour | 1 to 1 1/2 hours | 1 1/2 to 2 hours | more than 2 hours |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A - 80 students | 7 (9%) | 47 (59%) | 16 (20%) | 7 (9%) | 3 (4%) |
| Site B - 27 students | 4 (15%) | 14 (52%) | 6 (22%) | 3 (11%) | 0 (0%) |
| Site C - 22 students | 2 (9%) | 8 (36%) | 9 (41%) | 1 (5%) | 2 (9%) |
| Total - 129 students | 13 (10%) | 69 (53%) | 31 (24%) | 11 (9%) | 5 (4%) |

2. In how many subjects per night do you usually have homework?

| | 0-1 | 2-3 | 4-5 | 6-7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A - 81 students | 0 (0%) | 56 (69%) | 24 (30%) | 1 (1%) |
| Site B - 27 students | 4 (15%) | 20 (74%) | 3 (11%) | 0 (0%) |
| Site C - 22 students | 1 (5%) | 10 (45%) | 11 (50%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total - 130 students | 5 (4%) | 86 (66%) | 38 (29%) | 1 (1%) |

Question 1 asks students how much time they spend per night on homework. The data indicates that 82 of the 129 students responding or 63% spent one hour or less on homework per night. A majority of students at Site A (59%) and Site B (52%) spend one-half to one hour on homework each night. At Site C, a high school site, 36% of the students spend one-half to one hour on homework per night, while 41% spend one to one and one-half hours. The total for all three sites indicates that 10% of the students spend less than one-half hour per night on homework. Question 2 asks students in how many subjects per night they have homework. A majority of students at Site A (69%) and Site B (74%) have homework in two to three subjects per night. At Site C (a high school) the numbers are evenly distributed between two to three different subjects (45%) and four to five different subjects (50%) each night.

For purpose of analysis, the rest of the survey questions were divided into four separate categories: student responsibilities, parent responsibilities, teacher responsibilities, and general student attitudes and priorities with regard to homework. A summary of the questions comparing student and parent responses with respect to each category is presented and analyzed. Of the 133 parent surveys distributed, 124 were returned. Figure 1 is a summary of those questions from the survey concerning student responsibility for homework completion.

According to the data presented in Figure 1, 95% of the students surveyed feel they spend sufficient time on homework, while 81% of the parents surveyed feel their child spends sufficient time. When asked if spending more time on homework would improve their grades, 74% of the students agreed while over one-fourth, or 26%, disagreed. Parents and students seem to be in agreement on the question concerning having sufficient organizational skills to complete homework; 84% of the students and 82% of the parents felt the students had sufficient skills to successfully complete homework assignments. When the question was asked whether students had a specific place to do homework, 79% of the students and 84% of the parents agreed the students had a specific place to do homework. Students and parents also agreed on having a set time to do homework with 75% of students and 73% of parents responding in the affirmative.

**Student Responsibility Survey Questions**

Student Responses

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 3 | How often do you use your assignment notebook? | A | 68 | 84% | 9 | 11% | 3 | 4% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 14 | 52% | 6 | 22% | 6 | 22% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 13 | 59% | 5 | 23% | 3 | 14% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 95 | 73% | 20 | 15% | 12 | 9% | 3 | 2% |
| 6 | How often do you have the necessary supplies to complete your homework? | A | 54 | 68% | 20 | 25% | 4 | 5% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 14 | 52% | 12 | 44% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 16 | 73% | 6 | 27% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 84 | 66% | 38 | 30% | 5 | 4% | 1 | 1% |
| 7 | How often do you do your homework at the same time every day? | A | 31 | 38% | 34 | 42% | 11 | 14% | 5 | 6% |
| | | B | 7 | 26% | 10 | 37% | 8 | 30% | 2 | 7% |
| | | C | 3 | 14% | 12 | 55% | 6 | 27% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 41 | 32% | 56 | 43% | 25 | 19% | 8 | 6% |
| 8 | How often do you do your homework in the same place every day? | A | 39 | 49% | 25 | 31% | 11 | 14% | 5 | 6% |
| | | B | 12 | 48% | 7 | 28% | 5 | 20% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 9 | 41% | 9 | 41% | 4 | 18% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 60 | 47% | 41 | 32% | 20 | 16% | 6 | 5% |
| 10 | How often do you use the time given in class to work on homework? | A | 43 | 53% | 27 | 33% | 8 | 10% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 15 | 58% | 9 | 35% | 2 | 8% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 9 | 41% | 9 | 41% | 3 | 14% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 67 | 52% | 45 | 35% | 13 | 10% | 4 | 3% |

Figure 1. Summary of Parent and Student Survey Responses to Student Responsibility Questions

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 13 | The amount of time I spend on homework is sufficient. | A | 32 | 39% | 46 | 56% | 4 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| | | B | 8 | 31% | 17 | 65% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 5 | 23% | 15 | 68% | 2 | 9% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 45 | 35% | 78 | 60% | 7 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| 19 | If I spent more time on homework my grades would improve. | A | 20 | 24% | 42 | 51% | 14 | 17% | 6 | 7% |
| | | B | 15 | 58% | 5 | 19% | 6 | 23% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 5 | 23% | 9 | 41% | 7 | 32% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 40 | 31% | 56 | 43% | 27 | 21% | 7 | 5% |
| 20 | Completing my homework makes me more prepared for class activities. | A | 38 | 47% | 34 | 42% | 7 | 9% | 2 | 2% |
| | | B | 13 | 50% | 11 | 42% | 1 | 4% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 7 | 32% | 11 | 50% | 3 | 14% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 58 | 45% | 56 | 43% | 11 | 9% | 4 | 3% |
| 22 | I have the organizational skills to complete my homework. | A | 28 | 35% | 38 | 47% | 11 | 14% | 4 | 5% |
| | | B | 6 | 23% | 18 | 69% | 2 | 8% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 8 | 36% | 10 | 45% | 4 | 18% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 42 | 33% | 66 | 51% | 17 | 13% | 4 | 3% |
| Parent Responses | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | My child has a certain time set aside for homework. | A | 33 | 49% | 21 | 31% | 12 | 18% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 5 | 19% | 12 | 46% | 8 | 31% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 3 | 14% | 9 | 41% | 7 | 32% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 41 | 36% | 42 | 37% | 27 | 23% | 5 | 4% |
| 7 | My child has a specific place to do homework. | A | 31 | 40% | 36 | 47% | 9 | 12% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 12 | 46% | 8 | 31% | 6 | 23% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 5 | 23% | 14 | 64% | 3 | 14% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 48 | 38% | 58 | 46% | 18 | 14% | 1 | 1% |
| 9 | The amount of time spent on homework is sufficient. | A | 18 | 23% | 52 | 66% | 7 | 9% | 2 | 3% |
| | | B | 8 | 32% | 12 | 48% | 4 | 16% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 2 | 9% | 10 | 45% | 7 | 32% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 28 | 22% | 74 | 59% | 18 | 14% | 6 | 5% |
| 16 | My child has the organizational skills necessary to successfully complete homework. | A | 17 | 22% | 43 | 56% | 14 | 18% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 5 | 19% | 18 | 69% | 2 | 8% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 5 | 23% | 14 | 64% | 3 | 14% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 27 | 22% | 75 | 60% | 19 | 15% | 4 | 3% |

Figure 1. (continued)

Figure 2 is a summary of those questions regarding teacher responsibilities.

**Teacher Responsibility Survey Questions**

Student Responses

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 14 | The homework I have is usually too difficult for me. | A | 5 | 7% | 5 | 7% | 51 | 67% | 15 | 20% |
| | | B | 0 | 0% | 4 | 16% | 11 | 44% | 10 | 40% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 3 | 14% | 16 | 73% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 5 | 4% | 12 | 10% | 78 | 63% | 28 | 23% |
| 15 | The homework I have is usually challenging enough for me. | A | 13 | 16% | 52 | 65% | 13 | 16% | 2 | 3% |
| | | B | 5 | 19% | 16 | 62% | 4 | 15% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 2 | 9% | 17 | 77% | 2 | 9% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 20 | 16% | 85 | 66% | 19 | 15% | 4 | 3% |
| 16 | I have too much homework. | A | 19 | 23% | 15 | 18% | 42 | 51% | 6 | 7% |
| | | B | 2 | 8% | 5 | 19% | 15 | 58% | 4 | 15% |
| | | C | 3 | 14% | 10 | 45% | 9 | 41% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 24 | 18% | 30 | 23% | 66 | 51% | 10 | 8% |
| 17 | Homework has a purpose and is not busy work. | A | 22 | 27% | 40 | 49% | 10 | 12% | 9 | 11% |
| | | B | 6 | 23% | 19 | 73% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 4 | 18% | 11 | 50% | 4 | 18% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 32 | 25% | 70 | 54% | 15 | 12% | 12 | 9% |
| 18 | My teacher should give me feed back on my homework. | A | 42 | 55% | 25 | 33% | 6 | 8% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 7 | 27% | 16 | 62% | 2 | 8% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 12 | 55% | 10 | 45% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 61 | 49% | 51 | 41% | 8 | 6% | 4 | 3% |
| 21 | I have good study skills | A | 6 | 9% | 18 | 27% | 2 | 0% | 40 | 61% |
| | | B | 3 | 12% | 19 | 73% | 4 | 15% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 4 | 18% | 12 | 55% | 3 | 14% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 13 | 11% | 49 | 43% | 9 | 8% | 43 | 38% |
| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 9 | How often do your feel you have clear directions for your homework? | A | 24 | 30% | 47 | 58% | 8 | 10% | 2 | 2% |
| | | B | 7 | 26% | 12 | 44% | 8 | 30% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 4 | 18% | 13 | 59% | 5 | 23% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 35 | 27% | 72 | 55% | 21 | 16% | 2 | 2% |

Figure 2. Summary of Parent and Student Surveys for Teacher Responsibility Questions

**Teacher Responsibility Survey Questions**

Parent Responses

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 10 | The assigned homework is at an appropriate level of difficulty. | A | 15 | 19% | 57 | 74% | 5 | 6% | 0 | 0% |
| | | B | 8 | 31% | 16 | 62% | 1 | 4% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 2 | 9% | 18 | 82% | 2 | 9% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 25 | 20% | 91 | 73% | 8 | 6% | 1 | 1% |
| 11 | Overall, my child has too much homework. | A | 3 | 4% | 5 | 6% | 59 | 77% | 10 | 13% |
| | | B | 1 | 4% | 1 | 4% | 19 | 76% | 4 | 16% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 17 | 77% | 5 | 23% |
| | | All | 4 | 3% | 6 | 5% | 95 | 77% | 19 | 15% |
| 12 | The assigned homework has a purpose and is not just busy work. | A | 16 | 21% | 56 | 74% | 4 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| | | B | 10 | 38% | 15 | 58% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 6 | 27% | 14 | 64% | 2 | 9% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 32 | 26% | 85 | 69% | 7 | 6% | 0 | 0% |
| 13 | Teachers should give prompt feed back on homework. | A | 48 | 62% | 28 | 36% | 2 | 3% | 0 | 0% |
| | | B | 16 | 62% | 9 | 35% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 13 | 59% | 7 | 32% | 2 | 9% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 77 | 61% | 44 | 35% | 5 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| 15 | My child has good study skills. | A | 19 | 25% | 45 | 58% | 10 | 13% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 6 | 23% | 12 | 46% | 8 | 31% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 4 | 18% | 11 | 50% | 7 | 32% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 29 | 23% | 68 | 54% | 25 | 20% | 3 | 2% |

Figure 2. (continued)

In Figure 2 the data represents responses to similar questions by students and parents. When asked if their homework is too difficult for them, 86% of the students disagreed. In a related question, 82% of the students agreed that their homework is challenging enough for them. When parents were asked a corresponding question, 93% agreed that the assigned homework is at an appropriate level of difficulty. The next comparison shows the responses regarding the amount of homework. Here a discrepancy is evident. According to the parents, 92% disagree that their child has too much homework. Students, on the other hand, have varied responses (41% agree and 59% disagree). Figure 3 presents a graphic representation of this discrepancy.

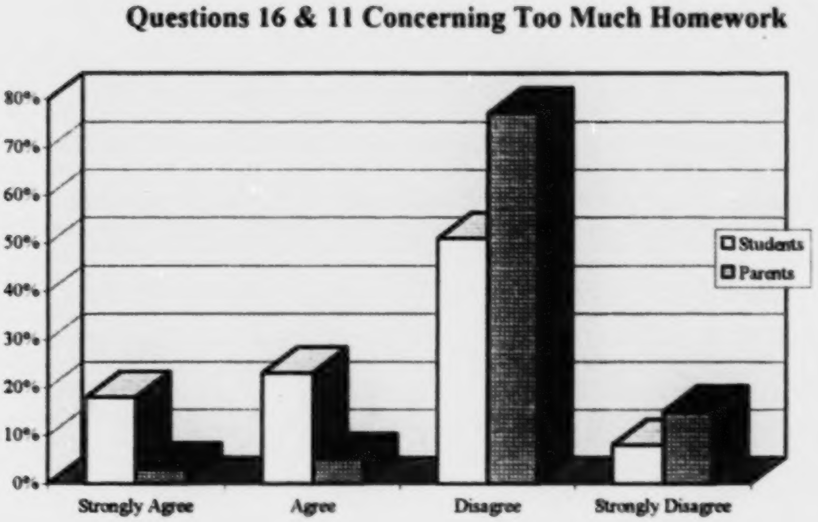
Questions 16 & 11 Concerning Too Much Homework

Figure 3. Responses to Too Much Homework

Questions 17 and 12 discuss the purpose of homework. Both students (79%) and parents (95%) agree that homework has a purpose and is not just busy work. The students at Site B had the highest agree rating of 96% compared to 76% of the students at Site A and 68% of the students at Site C. In both the parent and student surveys, there was an overwhelming agreement that teachers should give prompt feedback on homework. For the students, 41% agreed and 49% strongly agreed. Likewise, with the parents, 35% agreed and 61% strongly agreed. Questions 21 and 15 discuss study skills. A majority of parents (77%) believe that their children have good study skills. In contrast, the students' agreement is much less (54%).

A further analysis indicates that 38% of the students strongly disagree that they have good study skills while only 2% of the parents strongly disagree. Figure 4 graphs this data.

**Questions 21 & 15 Concerning Good Study Skills**

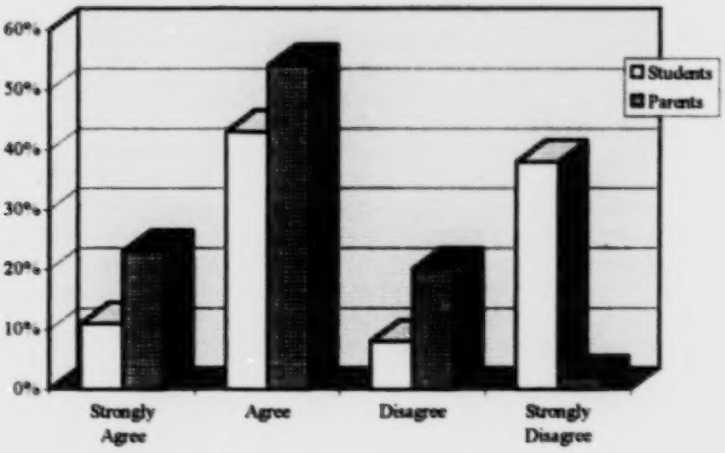

Figure 4. Responses to Good Study Skills

When examining the individual sites, there is a large discrepancy regarding the students' perception of their study skills. At Site A, 61% of the students strongly disagree that they have good study skills. On the other hand, at Site B (0%) and at Site C (14%) of the students strongly disagree.

A summary of the parent and student responses concerning parental responsibilities with regard to homework completion is presented in Figure 5. In Question 4 when students were asked how often their parents ask to see their homework, the responses were split: 47% stated that their parents often to almost always check on homework, while 53% responded with a seldom to never. Yet, when parents were asked two similar questions, there was a major discrepancy compared to the student responses. In Question 3 the majority of parents (91%)

agreed that they were aware of their child's homework assignments. Similarly, in Question 4 the majority of parents (77%) once again agreed that they often ask to see their children's homework.

**Parental Responsibility Survey Questions**

Student Responses

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 4 | How often do your parents ask to see your homework? | A | 16 | 20% | 30 | 37% | 28 | 35% | 7 | 9% |
| | | B | 9 | 33% | 5 | 19% | 11 | 41% | 2 | 7% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 1 | 5% | 11 | 50% | 10 | 45% |
| | | All | 25 | 19% | 36 | 28% | 50 | 38% | 19 | 15% |
| 5 | How often do your parents help you with your homework? | A | 4 | 5% | 35 | 43% | 37 | 46% | 5 | 6% |
| | | B | 5 | 19% | 4 | 15% | 17 | 63% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 4 | 18% | 13 | 59% | 5 | 23% |
| | | All | 9 | 7% | 43 | 33% | 67 | 52% | 11 | 8% |
| Parent Responses | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 3 | I am aware of my child's homework assignments. | A | 33 | 43% | 40 | 53% | 2 | 3% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 9 | 35% | 15 | 58% | 2 | 8% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 16 | 73% | 3 | 14% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 42 | 34% | 71 | 57% | 7 | 6% | 4 | 3% |
| 4 | I often ask to see my child's homework. | A | 37 | 49% | 27 | 36% | 10 | 13% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 11 | 42% | 11 | 42% | 4 | 15% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 1 | 5% | 7 | 32% | 11 | 50% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 49 | 40% | 45 | 37% | 25 | 20% | 4 | 3% |
| 5 | I often discuss homework with my child. | A | 34 | 46% | 35 | 47% | 5 | 7% | 0 | 0% |
| | | B | 11 | 42% | 13 | 50% | 2 | 8% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 3 | 14% | 10 | 45% | 9 | 41% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 48 | 39% | 58 | 48% | 16 | 13% | 0 | 0% |

Figure 5. Parent and Student Survey Responses to Parental Responsibility Questions

In Question 5 students were asked how often their parents help them with their homework. More than half of the students (60%) responded that their parents seldom to never ask to see their homework. Yet, a vast majority of parents (87%) stated that they often discuss homework with their child. Again, there is a discrepancy in parent and student responses.

A final category for data collection was student attitudes and priorities. In Figure 6 the student and parent responses to questions concerning the importance of homework is presented.

**Attitude Toward Homework Survey Questions**

Student Responses

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 12 | Completing my homework is important. | A | 56 | 72% | 21 | 27% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 21 | 81% | 5 | 19% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 15 | 68% | 6 | 27% | 1 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 92 | 73% | 32 | 25% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| 19 | If I spent more time on my homework my grades would improve. | A | 20 | 24% | 42 | 51% | 14 | 17% | 6 | 7% |
| | | B | 15 | 58% | 5 | 19% | 6 | 23% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 5 | 23% | 9 | 41% | 7 | 32% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 40 | 31% | 56 | 43% | 27 | 21% | 7 | 5% |

Parent Responses

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | Completing homework is important. | A | 65 | 87% | 10 | 13% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | B | 25 | 96% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 20 | 91% | 2 | 9% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 110 | 89% | 13 | 11% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| 14 | Homework completion affects the final grade. | A | 42 | 55% | 33 | 43% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 17 | 68% | 8 | 32% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 12 | 55% | 9 | 41% | 1 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 71 | 58% | 50 | 41% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |

Figure 6. Summary of Student and Parental Attitudes toward Homework

Even though 98% of the students surveyed and 100% of the parents surveyed felt homework was important, the researchers wanted to gain a better understanding of what priority homework completion had when ranked against students' other activities. Table 5 presents a summary of the answer to Question 23 "Which of the following activities regularly take priority over homework time?" Ten categories of activities such as athletics, family, friends, and television were offered including a miscellaneous "other." Students were directed to check all the activities that regularly took priority over homework time in their lives.

Table 5

Student Responses to Question 23-Number of Activities that Take Priority over Homework

| No. of Activities | 0 | 1-2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | 9-10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A - 79 students | 9 (11%) | 29 (37%) | 23 (29%) | 8 (10%) | 5 (6%) | 5 (6%) |
| Site B - 26 students | 2 (8%) | 10 (38%) | 6 (23%) | 5 (19%) | 2 (8%) | 1 (4%) |
| Site C - 22 students | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | 9 (41%) | 8 (36%) | 4 (18%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total - 127 students | 12 (9%) | 39 (31%) | 38 (30%) | 21 (17%) | 11 (9%) | 6 (5%) |

Of the total 127 students who responded, 76 or 60% stated that three or more activities regularly take priority over homework time. The figure is especially dramatic for Site C where 95% of the students indicated that three or more activities took precedence over homework and of that 95%, 18% stated that more than six activities took priority.

A review of Question 8 of the teachers' survey reveals a different perspective on the probable causes of a lack of homework completion. Table 6 presents the data collected.

According to the teachers surveyed, the three most likely causes for lack of homework completion were identical at Sites A and C: a lack of motivation was the highest cause, a lack of student organization received the second highest number of responses, and a lack of parent involvement was the third highest probable cause. The teacher interviews at Site B (Appendix F) echo these results. The researcher asked both teachers what they thought were the most likely causes for the lack of homework completion. A lack of organizational skills and parental support were noted as the most probable causes.

Table 6

Teacher Responses to Question 8-Likely Causes for the Lack of Homework Completion

| Probable Causes | Site A - 34 teachers | Site C - 23 teachers | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| lack of parent involvement | 20 (59%) | 9 (39%) | 29 (51%) |
| inappropriate assignment | 1 (3%) | 1 (4%) | 2 (4%) |
| outside distractions | 13 (38%) | 6 (26%) | 19 (33%) |
| lack of organization | 25 (74%) | 10 (43%) | 35 (61%) |
| lack of study skills | 13 (38%) | 5 (22%) | 18 (32%) |
| lack of supplies, place | 2 (6%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (4%) |
| lack of motivation | 22 (65%) | 20 (87%) | 42 (74%) |

## Literature Based

The probable causes for students not completing their homework suggested by the literature are complex and interactive. As Cooper states, "homework assignments are influenced by more factors than any other instructional strategy" (Cooper, 1994, p. ix).

Cooper suggests teachers, students, parents, and the community at large all contribute to the problem of a lack of homework completion (Cooper, 1994).

A large portion of the literature looks to teachers and their instructional practices for the cause of the problem. One of the major problems presented is the type of homework that is assigned. According to many experts, teachers do not take into consideration the differences that occur in their students' home environments, abilities, and learning styles when assigning homework. Boers and Caspary (1995, p. 37) assert that by not taking "into account their [students] individual problems or academic abilities, we are setting these kids up for failure." Palardy cites the work of Rogers whose research found that, "in more than 50% of classrooms, teachers give all students the same homework assignment with no accommodation for student differences" (Palardy, 1995, p. 33). Sullivan and Sequeira support Palardy's assumption. "Blanket assignments of textbook exercises for homework rarely address student variation. Students need to be personally involved with what has been offered in the classroom (Sullivan & Sequeira, 1996, p. 346). This lack of relevancy suggested by Sullivan and Sequeira is an instructional deficit to which other researchers point. Black feels that unless teachers plan and implement homework that addresses powerful, important curriculum concepts which allow students to transfer what they have learned in school to real-life problem solving, homework incompletion will always be a problem (Black, 1997).

In addition to the type of homework assigned, the amount is also cited as a cause for homework incompletion. In her research with high school students, Black found that too often teachers underestimated the time it takes students to complete assignments (Black, 1997). Palardy adds that not only is the amount of time underestimated, but that the amount of time needed is too inconsistent for students to develop a plan to budget their time. Too often students may be loaded down with several assignments one night and then have hardly any homework the next (Palardy, 1995).

Even if the homework itself is appropriate, how it is assigned and assessed plays a major role in the lack of successful homework completion for many students. Students complain, according to Black (1997), that teachers assign homework at the last minute of class without making sure that students understand what the assignment is or determining if the students have the necessary skills to successfully complete the homework. If the homework that is completed does not receive prompt and relevant feedback, students become unmotivated to continue to do more assignments (Black, 1997; Hinchey, 1996; Palardy, 1995).

Thomas (1993) also looks to teachers for a part of the problem, but he takes a different approach. Thomas feels that teachers are trying too hard to help students be successful, especially on tests. By handing out prepared study guides and other support materials, teachers are actually sending their students the message that independent learning and homework is not important. If a student is going to get a teacher prepared outline of the chapter he was to read for homework, why bother reading the homework?

Although much of the literature focuses on teacher contributions to the problem, students also are an important factor. Thomas further asserts that middle grade and high school students lack the study strategies to be successful at their homework. The students do not study to mastery, have no real organization or plan, and choose to study in places with many distractions. When reviewing the study strategies used by students for tests, many students spend time rereading material and trying to memorize facts rather than creating their own study sheets or employing critical thinking (Thomas, 1993). This lack of organization and study strategies is also true for foreign language instruction. Haggstrom (1993) found that foreign language students do not grasp the organization of the textbook and are unaware or unable to use various textual resources available.

While agreeing that teachers and students both play a role in the problem of incomplete homework, Canter (1991) emphasizes the important part parents play in the problem. He asserts that parents are the most important people in their children's lives. If parents do not by words and actions share with their children the importance of school and homework, they are unconsciously fostering the problem. If parents do not help their children organize and schedule their time and provide a place conducive to study, their children will not regularly complete their homework assignments. Canter also asserts that parents often are more interested in making their children happy rather than responsible, independent learners (Canter, 1991).

No matter how committed and involved the parents are, however, unless there is a clearly stated policy on homework, confusion results leading to high frustration and ultimately failure. Administrators must develop and implement a homework policy that gives clear, thought-out guidelines including the purpose for and time requirements of the homework assigned if homework completion is to improve (Canter, 1991; Cooper, 1989). Furthermore, administrators and districts must not just set a policy, but also provide inservice to teachers. A lack of training about when or how to assign and assess homework is suggested by Sullivan and Sequeira (1996) as a contributing factor to the overall problem of homework incompletion.

An analysis of the site based data, in light of a review of the probable causes identified in the literature, again identifies three major categories of probable causes: teachers, parents, and students. One of the major causes suggested by the literature is that teachers do not take into account students' individual abilities and learning styles, do not consider time constraints, and do not set a clear purpose for homework. An examination of the site based data indicates that while parents overwhelmingly feel the amount of homework is not a major concern, the students are more evenly divided. However, when the actual amount of homework time indicated by the students was analyzed, the researchers felt that the amount of homework assigned was not a probable cause at the sites. The data also indicated that the difficulty level of homework assignments was generally appropriate. There was some evidence, however, to support that students, especially at Site C, felt that homework was busy work. Therefore, a lack of relevancy and attention to student differences in learning styles does seem to be a problem. This is supported by the teachers' survey which stated that a lack of student motivation is a major cause for homework incompletion.

A lack of parental involvement is suggested by the literature review and supported by data from the sites as another probable cause. The survey responses indicated major discrepancies between how involved and supportive parents saw themselves compared to their student's perceptions of parental involvement. The teachers surveyed agreed with the students, listing a lack of parental involvement as one of the three major causes for a lack of homework completion.

Student's skills and attitudes play an important role in the problem of insufficient homework completion. Poor organizational skills and inadequate study skills are both cited in the literature as probable causes for a lack of homework completion. There is a major discrepancy in the data at the sites. Students and parents feel that the students have the organizational skills necessary to successfully complete homework. However, the teachers surveyed included a lack of organizational skills as one of the major probable causes for a lack of homework completion. The question of appropriate study skills also points out a marked difference of opinion. Parents have much more confidence in their children's study skills than the students themselves do. Student attitudes and priority setting are another factor contributing to the problem. Although students overwhelmingly feel that homework is important, the large amount of activities that regularly take priority over homework time is a probable cause for a lack of homework completion.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Literature Review

"Mention the word 'homework' to a group of teachers, parents, or students, and be prepared to evoke a wide range of emotionally-charged opinions and feelings based on tradition, the work ethic, irrational reasoning, individual definitions, and perhaps, even some research" (Earle, 1992, p. 36). Earle's perfunctory mention of research as an element contributing to the controversy regarding homework is unfortunately all too true. A cursory glance of the research on homework would seem to indicate a large and impressive body of knowledge. Indeed, the descriptor homework yields 872 citations available on ERIC for consideration. A closer examination of the literature, however, shows much controversy, inadequate or flawed research design, and conclusions drawn that actually refute the results of experiments. As cited in Vratania (1988), DiNapoli's study of six New York elementary schools to determine the effect of compulsory versus voluntary homework showed a positive correlation between compulsory homework and achievement with fifth grade students and a negative correlation with seventh grade students. Nevertheless, DiNapoli's recommendation from the study was to abolish all compulsory homework. Goldstein, who included DiNapoli's study in one of the first really comprehensive investigations into the literature concerning the effects of homework, felt that DiNapoli's conclusion was actually more a reflection of the current, popular view of the 1930s against compulsory homework rather than a thoughtful, considered recommendation based on the experimental data (Goldstein, 1960; Vratania, 1988). Cooper, considered by many educators today to be one of the most knowledgeable experts on homework (Black, 1996; Ziegler, 1992), supports Goldstein's assumption. "Not surprisingly, reviews of homework research give appraisals that generally fit the tenor of their times" (Cooper, 1989, p. 86). Ziegler agrees as she states, "There is some evidence that in decades when homework has been popular, researchers have 'discovered' its efficacy, whereas in times less friendly to homework the same empirical results have been interpreted quite differently" (Ziegler, 1992, p. 603). Therefore, any in-depth examination of the literature and research base on homework must include an understanding of the attitude towards homework that was dominant at the time of the research.

The cyclical pattern of homework's popularity is well documented (Cooper, 1989; Vratania, 1988; Ziegler, 1992). At the beginning of the 20th century, the predominant learning theory suggested that the mind was a muscle that needed exercise like any other muscle to be healthy. Thus, the homework assigned was usually lengthy memorization and rote drill (Cooper, 1989). One of the earliest indications that such homework was not universally accepted was an article published in the 1913 *Ladies Home Journal* (as cited by Foyle, 1985; Vratania, 1988). The magazine had conducted a survey of educational administrators, parents, and even doctors concerning the effect homework had on children. Based on the results of the survey, the article called for a ban on home study on the grounds that homework was "unwholesome, professionally unsupervised, and allowed the children to practice mistakes" (Vratania, 1988, p. 8). It is interesting to note that neither teachers nor students were included in the survey. By the end of the 1920s the rejection of this rote memorization homework in educational circles was well under way. As Good stated in a 1926 edition of the *Elementary School Journal*, "There should be no compulsory home tasks assigned in the lower grades, and there may be serious doubts as to the wisdom of requiring homework in any of the grades of the elementary school" (as cited by Vratania, 1988, p. 8).

The advent of the Great Depression and two World Wars resulted in a shift in emphasis from rote practice and memorization to problem solving. Such a shift favored in-school rather than at-home study, and homework generally fell out of favor as an instructional practice (Cooper, 1989). It is during this period that DiNapoli conducted his study previously discussed which called for the abolishment of compulsory homework. At about the same time, Crawford and Carmichael (as cited by Vratania, 1988) published their six year study of homework and its relationship to academic achievement at a California elementary school. Their conclusion stated there was a small but not significant difference favoring assigned homework. In response, the elementary school involved in the research study subsequently abolished all homework. A follow up study showed a significant deterioration in high school grades of the students who were enrolled at the elementary school after the establishment of the no-homework policy. And yet, the position against homework became even more entrenched as Otto emphatically wrote in 1950, "compulsory homework does not result in sufficiently improved academic accomplishments to justify retention" (as cited by Cooper, 1989, p. 85).

Ironically it was another war that resulted in the public taking a more favorable view of homework, only this time it was the Cold War. In October, 1957, the USSR launched *Sputnik* and with it the beginnings of the race for superiority in outer space as well as on earth. Americans were consumed with the need to catch up and overtake the Russian threat. Homework was seen as one of the major ways to increase rigor and accelerate the acquisition of knowledge necessary to accomplish this goal (Cooper, 1989). It is not mere coincidence that it was in 1960 that Goldstein published the first really thorough examination of the previous research done on homework. His study included 280 articles published from 1928 to 1958. Of these 280 articles, only 17 were the result of original, experimental research. Although only four studies actually found a positive correlation between homework and achievement and nine yielded mixed results, Goldstein concluded that the best designed of the experiments supported the case for homework (Goldstein, 1960).

This second renaissance of homework was short lived. The political and social upheaval of the 1960s had an impact on educational practice in general, and more specifically on the attitude toward homework. Wildman expressed the concerns of many educators stating, "whenever homework crowds out social experience, outdoor recreation, and creative activities, and whenever it usurps time devoted to sleep, it is not meeting the basic needs of children and adolescents" (Wildman, 1968, p. 203). Hedges completed a review in 1964 of 40 studies on homework from 292 studies conducted between 1954 and 1969. He concluded that there was no "firm or comprehensive research evidence on the various facets of homework" (Hedges, 1964, p. 45). Also reflective of the 1960s, however, was the presence of dissenting voices. Strang (as cited by Vratania, 1988, p. 10) also conducted a review of the experimental research. Her findings indicated that for the most part the research was "limited and inadequate." Nevertheless, her conclusions argued for the necessity of homework and suggested that homework should involve extension and enrichment of class work. She further proposed that students should understand the purpose for homework and that much homework should be voluntary rather than compulsory. A questionnaire distributed by Check in 1966 (as cited by Vratania, 1988) found that both parents and teachers were strongly in favor of homework and that even more significantly, homework was seen as a means for achieving academic excellence.

With the 1970s battle cry for a back-to-basics approach and the advent of new math, homework became even more an area of confusion and conflict among educators (Lee, 1979; Vratania, 1988). A brief survey of professional opinions (as cited by Earle, 1992, p. 36-37) illustrates the depth of this conflict. "By not giving homework, teachers have found that student attitudes toward school work improve" (Kotnour, 1978, p. 63). "Homework seems preferable to non-homework at least for grades 4-10" (Austin, 1979, p. 119). "Work which can be done in the classroom should not be assigned to pupils for homework" (Geller, 1977, p. 63). Coulter in his review of the literature in 1979 commented on the problematic nature of most of the previous research. He felt that a major weakness was that homework was studied in "quantitative rather than qualitative terms" (Coulter, 1979, p. 23). Researchers, according to Coulter, depended much too heavily on surveys and assumptions. He encouraged researchers to go into the classroom for direct observation. A concise summation of the results of this lack of direct observation was given by Friesen in his review of 24 homework versus no homework studies between 1923 and 1976, "The results of the studies do not provide a clear-cut endorsement for either homework or no homework." (Friesen, 1979, p. 15).

The ambiguity in research conclusions and recommendations continued in the early 1980s. Knorr reported that educators could not even really agree on a common definition of homework (Knorr, 1981). While outlining five reasons given by educators to assign homework and indicating that students generally felt that homework helped improve their grades, LaConte's actual review of research indicated "the effectiveness of homework in improving achievement is inconclusive" (LaConte, 1981, p. 20).

Even the obvious inadequacy of the research could not stop a third renaissance of homework's popularity. Once again, a government action was the catalyst. In 1983, the report *A Nation at Risk* was released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Comparisons with other countries indicated a decrease in effort and national scores. A major recommendation by the committee was, "Students in high schools should be assigned far more homework than is now the case" (NCEE, 1983, p. 29). This report resulted in many additional studies of homework and its effectiveness, especially with respect to achievement. In addition, the introduction and use of more sophisticated statistical procedures and meta-analysis techniques had improved and clarified the previous research. "Both the extent and the limitations of the existing research base and the consistency of results across studies are appreciably clearer" (Ziegler, 1992, p. 603).

As had been the case during previous decades, many of the studies completed during the 1980s fell in line with the homework philosophy of the time and were in favor of homework. One of the first major attempts to synthesize and analyze previous studies during the decade was conducted by Paschal, Weinstein, and Walberg in 1984 (Ziegler, 1992). Of the 15 studies selected for the final comparisons, 85% favored homework over no-homework. In addition to their findings favoring assigned homework, Paschal et al also concluded the following: daily homework had a greater effect than sporadic homework, homework was equally effective with both lower and middle class socio-economic groups, and that homework had three times the effect on learning as socio-economic factors (Paschal, Weinstein, & Walberg, 1984). The work of Keith and Paige (1985) with high school seniors also supported the correlation between homework and achievement. Keith and Paige found that homework was significantly beneficial for white high school seniors and was even more influential on the academic achievement of Hispanic and black seniors (Keith & Paige, 1985). Foyle and Bailey also conducted extensive research during the mid 80s that provided strong support for the inclusion of homework. By means of a review of previous research as well as original experimentation, Foyle and Bailey determined that, "Homework which is regularly assigned, clearly stated, regularly collected, promptly graded and promptly returned increases student achievement when compared to students who were not assigned homework" (Foyle & Bailey, 1985, p. 6). Yet, even during this period of seemingly supportive research for homework, researchers were raising a caution flag (Otto, 1985). Paschal et al (as cited in Otto, 1985, p. 766) concluded that even though the results seemed very positive, "Much of the voluminous, 70-year old literature on homework is opinionated and polemical, and surprisingly few methodologically adequate studies have been conducted."

In 1986, Cooper was awarded a grant by the National Science Foundation "to try again to gather, summarize, and integrate the research on the effects of homework" (Cooper, 1989, p. 86). His two year study resulted in the first full-length book published on homework. Cooper reviewed nearly 120 studies and corresponded with state education agencies, school districts, and educational school deans in his search for a greater understanding of the homework issue. After first defining homework as "tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours" (Cooper, 1989, pg. 86), Cooper went on to identify from the literature review the potential positive and negative effects of homework. The positive effects included the following: improved retention and understanding of content, improved student study skills, increased independence in learning activities, and enhanced parental appreciation of education. Several negative effects were also noted such as increased student boredom, a reduction in time for other worthwhile extracurricular activities, increased negative parental interference, the promotion of undesirable character traits such as cheating, and the accentuation of socio-economic inequalities in education. Next, Cooper identified six different categories of factors that influenced the effect of homework. His work with many different factors led him to conclude, "that homework probably involves the complex interaction of more influences than any other instructional device" (Cooper, 1989, p. 87).

The actual studies reviewed by Cooper fell into three categories: studies comparing homework versus no-homework, studies comparing homework versus in-class study, and surveys of students comparing homework time to academic achievement. Cooper's detailed analysis led to a new insight into how homework correlates to achievement. His findings concluded, "Homework has a positive effect on achievement, but the effect varies dramatically with grade level. For high school students, homework has substantial positive effect. Junior high school students also benefit from homework, but only about half as much. For elementary school students, the effect of homework on achievement is negligible" (Cooper, 1989, p. 88). Additional findings indicated that homework used for the purpose of practice and preparation was beneficial, and that homework should be distributed across several days' content rather than just be concentrated on one day's material. Parent involvement seemed to have neither a negative nor a positive influence, but Cooper notes that this conclusion is based on only a few poorly designed studies. One of the most interesting conclusions seems to contradict the current call for individualizing homework (Alleman & Brophy, 1991; Black, 1996; Boers & Caspary, 1995). Cooper determined that, "Given the added burden individualization creates for teachers, its benefits were minimal" (Cooper, 1989, p. 89).

Because of the relatively small number of conclusive findings the research on homework can support, it is no wonder that Rodney Earle includes, "perhaps, some research" in his list of reasons for and against homework (Earle, 1992, p. 36). Thus, the central questions remain unresolved. "Why **do** we assign homework? Why **should** we assign homework?" (Earle, 1992, p. 37). The answers to these questions take on particular significance with respect to the proposed research project to increase homework completion. Why work to increase homework completion for junior high and high school students if there is no clear educational purpose for homework? Earle asserts that why the research has been so inconclusive and the answers to these questions so elusive is that there has been no theoretical framework for homework. "My [Earle] premise is that there exists a valid theory upon which homework should be based" (Earle, 1992, p. 37). The theory Earle suggests as a basis for the inclusion of homework is the Gagne-Briggs's Instructional Design theory. One of the most practical and obvious implications of the theory for educators (as cited in Earle, 1992, p. 37) is that, "teachers should structure the learning environment in such a way as to facilitate learning."

According to the Gagne-Briggs theory, learning is a process of identifying and filtering stimuli and then moving the stimuli into short term and, ultimately, long term memory from where it can be retrieved as necessary. Gagne has identified nine instructional events connected with specific stages of this learning process (Gagne, 1975; Gagne, Briggs, & Wager, 1988). While teachers cannot directly control this learning process, they can and should provide the instructional events necessary. Based on an analysis of the nine instructional events, Earle states that, "homework may be used to meet at least six of the events" (Earle, 1992, p. 39). These six events include the following: stimulation of recall of necessary previous learning, presentation of stimulus material, elicitation of performance, provision for feedback, assessment of performance, and enhancement of retention and transfer (Earle, 1992). Earle asserts that when educators clearly and consciously connect homework to one or more of the instructional events necessary for learning, it "is indeed an integral part of the instructional process" (Earle, 1992, p. 39). If Cooper's findings on the efficacy of homework for junior high and high school students are coupled with Gagne's theory of learning, a strong case can be made for the inclusion of homework into the total educational picture as well as for the validation of the proposed research project.

Hand-in-hand with the theoretical case for the inclusion of homework must be evidence that the targeted group of middle school and high school students are capable of performing the homework tasks. Just such support is presented by Thomas of the Beryl Buck Institute for Education. Thomas asserts that, "Maturational factors make the middle grades an ideal time to stress independent learning (Thomas, 1993, p. 576). As cited by Thomas (1993), current research suggests that middle grade students are capable of learning and using sophisticated techniques for memory augmentation (Jones & Hall, 1982), reading critically (Thompson, 1985), planning and self-regulation (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), and studying for a test (Brown, Campione, & Barclay, 1979). Thomas also cites the work of Kobsigawa, Ransom, and Holland (1980), as well as O'Brien, Kister, Bruce, & Kotsonis (1981), which indicates that, in comparison to younger students, only upper elementary and middle grade students are really capable of understanding and using study techniques independently (Thomas, 1993). Evidence also exists in research by Brown, Campione and Day in 1981, and Pressley and Ghatala in 1990 (as cited by Thomas, 1993), that students in the upper elementary grades are capable of using metacognition during learning and problem solving. In addition, research by Bretzing, Kulhavy, and Caterino in 1987 as well as Peper and Mayer in 1986 reveals that, "engagement in strategic study activities such as note taking, cognitive monitoring, and the construction of integrative representations (e. g., summaries) is associated with significant gains in achievement" (Thomas, 1993, p. 577). Finally, based on the results of surveys of older adolescent students conducted by Houston (1987), Leong and Sedlacek (1981), Pond (1964), and Weissberg, Berentson, Cote, Cravey, and Heath (1982), Thomas (1993, p. 577) believes that the "early acquisition and practice of independent learning skills may be critical for the development of the repertoire of mature learning skills that will be needed in later grades and helpful in later life."

A further review of the literature supports Thomas's claim and elaborates on the many benefits of homework for students both within and outside of the classroom. According to Turvey, "The basic aim of homework should be learning how to learn not merely preparation or practice" (Turvey, 1986, p. 33-34). Therefore, homework is to be an integral part of the educational experience which will meet both short-term and long-term goals (Turvey, 1986). Homework can also promote increased communication between home and school and make the all important connection between school learning and real-life application (Alleman & Brophy, 1991).

When homework is assigned, it is usually intended to help students meet short-term goals for their daily assignment needs. Generally, homework is given for practice, review, reinforcement, or preparation for a new lesson (Feggella, 1994). In addition, homework can have an immediate impact on the student's retention and understanding of the material it covers (Earle, 1992; Sullivan & Sequeira, 1996). So that teachers are not limited to a 50 minute period, homework can extend the time available for learning and enlarge the scope of the curriculum. Teachers can integrate many skills into a single assignment, provide an opportunity to meet the individual differences of the class, and use homework for diagnostic purposes (Corbally, 1995; Fegella, 1994).

In addition to short-term goals, homework completion can also produce long-term effects. "There are many potential nonacademic benefits as well, most of which relate to fostering independent and responsible character traits" (Sullivan & Sequeira, 1996, p. 346). According to Canter (1988), two of homework's most valuable by-products are to make children responsible and independent. Another long-term effect of homework is the ability to apply skills to new situations and real-life experiences. "Homework should help the student to establish study habits and learning skills that can be used to become familiar with any new information" (Turvey, 1986, p. 34). Homework helps to increase retention of a skill and the likelihood that the skill will be used in real life (Sullivan & Sequeira, 1996). By applying new information to everyday situations, students can see that learning takes place all the time and in all places. Therefore, homework can be used to develop an appreciation of community resources and the ability to employ them (Corbally, 1995). "Homework does have benefits to offer. It becomes an essential part of a student's total education when it provides an opportunity to integrate and expand school learning, reinforces independent work-study skills and self-discipline, and uses school and community resources. Moreover, homework can improve students' study skills and show them that learning can take place anywhere, not just in school buildings" (Sullivan & Sequeira, 1996, p. 346).

In addition to the positive short-term and long-term effects of homework, another benefit is the potential for parental involvement. Homework brings school into the home and enables the parents to participate in their children's education (Canter, 1991; Corbally, 1995). Canter goes so far as to propose that, "Homework has the potential to be the most consistent day-to-day contact you [teachers] can have with parents, particularly in the upper elementary grades and in secondary school" (Canter, 1991, p. 99). Homework establishes discussion between the parent and child, keeps the parents informed about what their child is doing in school, and gives parents an insight into the school's curriculum (Fegella, 1994; Turvey, 1986). If used correctly, homework can be a valuable public relations tool (Foyle, 1986). Finally, homework gives parents the opportunity to show their children how much they value education (Feggella, 1994).

A final benefit attributed to homework is that time spent on homework makes a difference in achievement. As indicated previously, Cooper's meta-analysis determined that homework has a substantial positive effect on the achievement of high school and junior high students (Cooper, 1989). There is some evidence that this effect is even more important for children with learning disabilities or other academic problems. According to the National Education Association, "The findings of the best research indicate that systematically assigned homework contributes to academic achievement of a variable degree for able learners; to some extent for the average, and to a more marked degree for slow learners (NEA, 1975). In addition, Keith (as cited in Turvey, 1986, p. 31) concludes that, "With one to three hours of homework a week, a low-ability student could achieve grades comparable to those of an average-ability student who did no homework." Parental help may be limited or unavailable because of economic priorities or crowded schedules, yet one of the positive benefits of homework is that it is an appropriate intervention for students with diverse needs, including low-ability students, minorities, the economically disadvantaged, and learning disabled (Doyle & Barber, 1990). Therefore, as Sullivan and Sequeira (1996, p. 348) so aptly state, "The issue is not whether we should have homework, but rather how to make homework a viable extension of class work and make it contribute to learning."

Homework can continue to be one of the most "haphazard teaching practices in American schools today" (Palardy, 1995, p. 32), or it can provide all the benefits previously discussed. The literature suggests many solutions to this homework dilemma. However, since there are so many complex and interrelated factors involved, responsibility for successful homework assignments and completion is multifaceted as well (Cooper, 1989). Teachers, parents, students, and the school as a whole all need to be involved and participating in the solution process.

Since teachers are the main instructional designers, they are necessarily an integral part of the solution. First and foremost, for each assignment teachers need a clearly established purpose that is thoughtfully connected to the internal learning process of the students (Earle, 1992; England & Flatley, 1985). Each time the teacher gives an assignment, the following statement should be brought into focus: Doing your homework tonight should help you to. . . (England & Flatley, 1985). Research has found that students are more likely to do homework if its purpose has been clarified and its relevance demonstrated by the teacher (Turvey, 1986). This is supported by Sullivan and Sequeira (1996, p. 347) who propose that, "Students do much better in learning if they believe that they can use what they learned, that it is important, and that the quality of the work really matters."

For homework to be beneficial to students, teachers should think about how each assignment may really help their students in a class, expand their experiences, or establish a knowledge base to build upon (England & Flatley, 1985). Other researchers consider just as important the concept that homework must transfer school learning to real life problem solving. Without this connection, students just see homework as more school work that needs to be done for a grade and to keep the teacher happy (Black, 1997; Boers & Caspary, 1995). Homework effectively fulfills its educational purpose when it is related to learning outcomes that the students perceive as meaningful, is focused for maximum benefit for the time required, is clearly and thoroughly described, is within the ability range of the students, stresses initiative and individuality, and requires imagination and creativity (Cooper, 1989, Turvey, 1986). Sullivan and Sequeira include these important components as well as additional requirements in their list of teacher "do's" and "don'ts." Included in the "do's" are assigning an appropriate amount and type of homework that reinforces previously learned material and develops critical thinking skills. In addition, homework assignments should be relevant and lead to mastery of material as well as provide for student input and choice. On the other hand, teachers should not assign repetitious and boring homework or use homework as a punishment. Additional "don'ts" include assigning homework with incomplete instruction or homework that only concentrates on lower level thinking skills. Most importantly, teachers should not feel obligated to assign homework if there is no good reason to do so (Sullivan & Sequeira, 1996).

Thomas sheds additional light on the responsibility of teachers and suggests both traditional and innovative changes in instruction for increased student achievement. First, he believes that teachers must communicate the performance standards and goals of homework assignments as clearly as possible. Research by Anderson and Armbruster in 1984 and Entwistle and Tait in 1990 (as cited by Thomas, 1993) supports the correlation between clear expectations and student effort. Secondly, teachers need to stress independence and mastery rather than just following directions and competing for grades. Finally, Thomas suggests that there needs to be a high correlation between course work and tests. Research by Duckworth, Fielding, and Shaughnessey in 1986 (as cited by Thomas, 1993) found that if students perceived a correlation between course work and tests, they put forth more effort in their study practices. Thomas points out, however, that the relationship should be one of the format of the questions and the type of thinking skills required rather than an actual identity between homework questions and test questions. In fact, research by Crooks and Sanford (as cited by Thomas, 1993) found that providing study guides and other support "safety nets," such as teachers regularly do to review for tests, actually decreased student effort on independent learning activities and homework.

Usually reading assignments, short essay answers, and drill problems comprise the bulk of homework assignments (Turvey, 1986). In order to meet the needs of all students, from time to time teachers should modify the daily routine of homework assignments. Teachers should give creative homework that enhances children's social skills and stimulates them to think, experiment, and observe (Feggella, 1994). For example, long-term projects can be more beneficial than practice drills (Turvey, 1986). These projects encourage students to use high level cognitive skills in gathering information, analyzing data, planning sequences, and synthesizing a variety of skills (Partin, 1986). Bergenski suggests a novel approach to get children to complete routine homework assignments. She asserts that teachers can assign homework activities that, "students will love to do-and that will help them develop all kinds of skills: observation, communication, cooperation, concentration, memorization . . . plus they'll be improving their ability to listen, read, write, discover, and follow directions" (Bergenski, 1988, p. 91). These assignments are called "silly homework" and include brushing your teeth with the hand you don't usually use, making your bed with your eyes closed, and writing down five things you like to do and do one (Bergenski, 1988).

In order to be effective, homework assignments need to be more than just novel; they need to take into account children's individual needs, skills, and life situations. Black recommends individualizing homework assignments to reflect students' interests and learning styles. She also recommends allowing students occasionally to come up with ideas for their homework. The key to getting students to learn outside of the classroom is, "allowing kids to be active and imaginative" (Black, 1997, p. 39). Black bases her suggestions, in part, on the work of Boers and Caspary. They have proposed "real-life" homework which is comprised of personally relevant assignments geared toward each child's individual abilities. Examples include field trips, interviews, letter writing, and even doubling cooking recipes (Boers & Caspary, 1995). Partin (1986), in his article "Homework that Helps," lists other interesting real-life homework assignments such as designing the ideal car, planning a family trip or a week's balanced menu, inventing a game, attending public meetings, or doing volunteer work. Despite Black's (1996) and Boers' and Caspary's (1995) emphasis on individualizing homework, Cooper maintains an opposing viewpoint. He feels that the practice of individualizing homework assignments is unrealistic and an inefficient use of teacher instructional time (Cooper, 1989).

The teacher's responsibility does not end with providing purposeful, relevant, creative, and individualized homework. Research suggests that the feedback provided on homework assignments is almost as important as the assignments themselves. The way homework assignments are evaluated and factored into grades should be clear to students and parents (England & Flatley, 1985). Knowing that the homework will be checked and graded is a powerful incentive (Turvey, 1986). "Research has found that all kinds of teacher feedback has positive effects, whether it is grading, comments, or just reinforcement for completing assignments" (Feggella, 1994, p. 84). The evidence strongly suggests that grading homework makes a big difference in its effectiveness and the students' academic achievements (Feggella, 1994; Lange, 1990; Walberg, Paschal, & Weinstein, 1985) In Black's study of high school students in New York, in-depth interviews found support among students for the importance of homework. However, students resented homework that they considered busy work or homework that was not truly evaluated by the teacher (Black, 1997). Nevertheless, the importance of feedback is not unanimously supported by the literature. A number of researchers have differing views concerning feedback on homework. Cooper feels feedback on homework assignments has little apparent effect on achievement (Cooper, 1989). Earle states practice homework should not be graded (Earle, 1992), while Austin suggests marking some homework assignments is as effective as marking all of it (Austin, 1978).

Unfortunately, even the best designed homework assignment will be unsuccessful if the students do not have the prerequisite reading and study skills for home study. Teachers should take the time to teach reading and study skills such as note-taking, outlining, listening, and time management. According to Thomas (1993, p. 587), "middle grade students appear to benefit most when instruction in study skills and learning strategies occur in supportive group settings." Such group settings need to incorporate the modeling of phonics and reading strategies, interaction between teacher and peers, explicit instruction in strategies, and opportunities to practice and develop the students' own strategies. Such techniques as peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and the formation of study groups are helpful. Classrooms that are informal, cooperative, student centered, and focused on effort rather than ability are what should be implemented to increase independent learning and motivation (Thomas, 1993). "Teachers must set cooperation as a desirable goal in the quality production of homework. . . When students are at the center of their own learning and connect with information, they are more likely to move to the higher level of thinking" (Sullivan & Sequeira, p. 347).

Although the teacher's role in improving the completion of homework assignments is a vital one, it alone is not sufficient for success. As Canter states, "Parents are the most important people in a child's life. Their love, affection, support and approval are a fundamental need of all children. And because parents are #1 in importance, they are also #1 in the ability to influence and motivate their children" (Canter, 1991, p. 3). Homework could be called the daily "public relations package" (Foyle & Bailey, 1986) uniting school and home, teacher and parent. Henderson (as cited in Dwyer & Hecht, 1992, p. 3) asserts, "The plurality of research has shown that schools that engage in parent involvement programs tend to see immediate and positive results from their efforts." The best parent involvement may simply be as signers of completed assignments and hence motivation for work completion (Ziegler, 1992). Homework can involve parents in the school process thereby enhancing their appreciation of education and allowing them to be aware of their child's achievements and growth (Sullivan & Sequeira, 1996). Eastman (as cited by Dwyer & Hecht, 1992) emphasizes the importance of conceiving the parent as a complement to the teacher and not an adversary. Dwyer and Hecht (1992) found that by reviewing the child's homework, there was improvement in the parent-child, parent-school, and school-family relationships. Parental involvement also resulted in improved student academic performance. Hart (1988) found that "involving parents leads to increased academic achievement for students at all educational and economic levels." Eagle (1989) found that "parental involvement during high school was solely responsible for increased achievement once social background factors were controlled" (as cited in Dwyer & Hecht, 1992, p. 6)

There are many sources parents can use to improve their effectiveness in the educational process of their children. Canter has written an entire book on the subject (Canter, 1988). Sullivan and Sequeira (1996) also give some specific ways parents can help their children successfully complete homework assignments. They suggest that parents should ensure that their child has a specific and appropriate place and time and the necessary supplies to do his homework. Parents need to develop an interest in what their child is learning and communicate as needed with the teacher. Removing distractions, encouraging independent reading, and helping with organization are also important parental responsibilities. Parents also need to be cognizant of what they should not do. According to Sullivan and Sequeira (1996), parents should not do the homework for their child or accept the idea that there is no homework. Parents should also not allow children to procrastinate on homework or to schedule extracurricular activities that interfere with homework. Most importantly, parents should not allow their child to do sloppy, messy, and hurried work.

Considering all the suggestions for parental involvement, why are some parents still not playing an active role in their child's education? Brown (as cited in Dwyer & Hecht, 1992) lists the following reasons for low parent involvement: lack of time, feelings of inadequacy, and not wanting to interfere with the school's business. Holliday (also cited by Dwyer & Hecht, 1992) reiterates and expands upon this list, adding that the school's organizational structure does not lend itself to sustained parent-teacher contact and that adolescents are increasingly independent and may resist when parents attempt to become involved. Dwyer and Hecht (1992) give other potential reasons for low parental involvement including no prior involvement, the abdication of responsibility to the school, and the lack of a single identifiable contact person when there are multiple teachers.

As seen in the literature, teachers and parents have specific responsibilities and should play an active role toward homework completion. However, do the students fulfill all of their responsibilities for homework completion? Teachers feel that students do not put out the necessary effort and do not make homework a priority in their lives while students feel that they would do homework if "it is reasonable, interesting, and clear" (Black, 1997, p. 50). In order for students to be successful, the National Education Association (1975) recommends that students have the necessary materials on hand and use a quiet study area free from interruptions. England and Flatley (1985) suggest that students have assignment notebooks and inform teachers if homework is excessive. They further advise students to expect a reasonable amount of homework and understand that not all homework will be easy. In their article, "Homework-and Why," England and Flatley (1985) give a list of suggestions for students which include the following: asking parents and teachers for help only when really needed, explaining legitimate reasons for incomplete homework assignments but not relying on excuses, and making every effort to complete the homework assigned.

Metacognition also has an important role in the internalization of study habits and homework completion. Alleman and Brophy (1992, p. 18-19) believe that homework assignments will have their greatest impact if they are "structured and scaffolded in ways that will help students to carry them out with metacognitive awareness of their goals and purposes and metacognitive control of their strategies." The work of Brown, Campione, and Day (as cited by Thomas, 1993) provides evidence that middle school students are capable of "cognitive monitoring" which is "a likely prerequisite to meaningful independent learning" (Thomas, 1993, p. 577).

The final piece in the puzzle of improved homework completion is the school administration. To clarify homework expectations, there should be school and district-wide homework policies (Cooper, 1989; Ziegler, 1992). Parents should be involved in the development of these policies (England & Flatley, 1985). Since the lack of a homework policy only frustrates both students and parents, if the school or district does not have a homework policy, teachers should decide on their own what to do about homework (Canter, 1988; Turvey, 1986).

Whether the policies are school designed or teacher made, they need to be communicated to the parents. Teachers should send letters home early in the year to explain homework policies as well as major projects (Canter, 1991). In addition, teachers could send parents a weekly or monthly summary of homework assignments. In this way, students and parents could budget their time accordingly (Sullivan & Sequeira, 1996). When communicating with parents, Feggella (1994) gives the following suggestions: explain the policy at Open House or send it home, give reasons why there is homework being assigned, state the amount and frequency of homework, list expectations and responsibilities for students and parents, and explain how the teacher will give feedback on the homework.

It seems as if the controversy regarding homework and the perennial problem of homework completion has been around as long as the public educational system. The dogged persistence and longevity of the problem, as well as the frustrations encountered by all parties involved, might initially invite despair. However, after reviewing the suggested solutions, there is definitely cause for hope. With the combined commitment of teachers, parents, students, and the school district itself much can be done "to change the homework cycle of futility into a productive, even a positive venture" (Marino, 1993, p. 71) which accomplishes the main purpose of any study assignment, "learning how to learn efficiently" (NEA, 1975).

## Project Outcomes and Solution Components

> As a result of increasing parental involvement, using cooperative learning, and modifying the amount and type of homework during the period of September, 1997, to February, 1998, the three targeted classes will increase homework completion as measured by late homework parent notification slips, teacher grade books, and student surveys.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Materials regarding specific homework policies and parental involvement with homework will be written and distributed to parents.

2. Cooperative learning activities such as homework support base groups with specific tasks will be developed and implemented.

3. Teachers will evaluate and design homework assignments to better meet student individual needs and learning styles as well as curricular objectives.

## Project Action Plan

Objective: to increase homework completion

T denotes team activity, I denotes individual activity.

I. June-August

   A. Collect census data - I

   B. Write draft of Chapter 1 - T

C. Prepare the following instruments

   1. Parent information letter (Appendix A) - T
   2. Student survey (Appendix B) - T
   3. Parent survey (Appendix C) - T
   4. Teacher survey (Appendix D) - I

D. Interview fifth grade teachers at Site B (Appendix F) - I

E. Gather and read literature - T

F. Write draft of Chapter 3 - T

G. Identify specific intervention strategies - T

H. Locate parent involvement tips and materials (Appendix G) - T

I. Chapter 1 submitted for review and approval - T

II. September

A. Distribute parent information letter- T

B. Administer student survey - T

C. Administer parent survey - T

D. Administer teacher surveys at Sites A and C - I

E. Analyze and tabulate all surveys - I

F. Collect, tabulate baseline evidence of problem with targeted students for three weeks - I

G. Administer Learning Styles Inventory (Appendix H) - T

H. Write draft of Chapter 2

I. Submit drafts of Chapters 2 and 3

III. Mid-September through December

A. Implement intervention strategies - T

1. Parental involvement:

a. Send home homework tips

b. Parental signatures required on late-work slips (Appendix E)

c. Inform parents through letters and newsletters of upcoming assignments

d. Include parental interaction homework assignments

2. Cooperative Learning Strategies

a. Form homework cooperative study groups

b. Include cooperative learning activities at least once per week

c. Use metacognitive stems and questions to process and evaluate homework at least once per month (Appendix I)

3. Homework Modification:

a. Include in at least one unit per month provisions for multiple intelligences in homework assignments

b. Plan successful, parental interaction assignments - I

c. State purpose and show relevancy for each homework assignment when assigned - I

d. Regulate the amount of homework daily to not exceed twenty minutes per subject - I

B. Meet periodically to discuss, evaluate, and modify interventions - T

C. Revise Chapters 1, 2, and 3 - T

IV. Mid-December through January

   A. Collect and tabulate results of interventions with targeted students for three weeks - I

   B. Administer post-assessment tools

   C. Submit Chapters 1, 2, and 3 for final approval

V. February through April

   A. Analyze data and completed assessments - T

   B. Draft, revise, and complete Chapter 4 - T

   C. Create professional portfolio - I

   D. Design brochure and exhibition presentation - T

   E. Submit entire Action Research Project

## Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, student and parent surveys (Appendices B and C) will be developed and distributed in September and then again in January. A record of parent notifications of late homework (Appendix E) will be kept in teachers' grade books and tabulated. Weekly journal entries (Appendix J) reflecting interventions and results will be included.

# CHAPTER 4

# PROJECT RESULTS

## Historical Description of the Intervention

The terminal objective of the intervention addressed improving student homework completion. Indications were that a lack of parental involvement and support, student attitudes and priorities, and inappropriate and irrelevant homework seemed to contribute to the problem. Therefore the terminal objective stated:

> As a result of increasing parental involvement, using cooperative learning, and modifying the amount and type of homework during the period of September, 1997, to February, 1998, the three targeted classes will increase homework completion as measured by late homework parent notification slips, teacher grade books, and student surveys.

## Interventions

In order to accomplish this terminal objective, materials and strategies to increase parental involvement were developed and implemented. In addition, cooperative learning lessons and activities including metacognitive processing were utilized. As a final component of the intervention, each researcher monitored and modified homework assignments. The modifications were to plan assignments for multiple intelligences, to provide opportunities for successful parental interaction, to show purpose and relevancy for the assignments being made, and to limit the time students spent on daily homework assignments.

An increase in parental involvement was initially encouraged by distributing materials regarding specific homework policies at each site. At each of the three sites, the homework policy stated that students had to fill out a late assignment slip (Appendix E) for each late assignment. This slip had to be signed by the parent and returned the next day with the completed late assignment. Consequences for receiving a late slip differed at each site. At Site A, a late slip automatically lowered an assignment to a grade of C. If the number of late slips accrued per team reached ten (two per course subject area) a teacher made a phone call to the student's home. At Site B a late slip meant an automatic 10% deduction on the assignment. If late slips and/or late homework assignments were not returned the next day, students were required to fill out a 0% notification slip and call their parents at recess to inform them that they had received a zero for the missing assignment. At Site C when students received a late slip for missing homework they also lost five points from their current grade. If the assignment was completed and turned in the next day along with the late slip, the student would regain three of the five points.

Other important information was also communicated to parents. Homework tips regarding scheduling daily homework time as well as a general philosophy statement of the different responsibilities teachers, students, and parents have with regard to homework were also given to parents at all three sites (Appendix G). These materials were distributed at the beginning of the school year in September, with progress reports in October, and at the first parent-teacher conference in November. In addition, at Site A newsletters (Appendix K) were sent home with each mid-term progress report. These newsletters stated deadlines for turning in any late or missing assignments and reemphasized the importance of completing all homework given. The newsletters also informed parents of upcoming events or projects. Site A also had a Homework Hotline where parents could call in and find the homework assignments for their children. At Site B, letters regarding large and/or long-term assignments were sent to parents (Appendix L). These letters not only described the assignment, but also gave parents specific ways they could help their students be successful.

As a supplement to the general written communication, personal communication also occurred. At all sites, telephone calls were made informing parents of any problems their children were having with homework completion. At Site A, in addition to calling parents when needed, students had to meet with the team teachers to discuss problems and set goals. The students also met with individual teachers during lunch to work on late assignments. At Site B special problem-solving conferences were held with children who were experiencing much difficulty with homework completion. In one severe case, the Principal was also involved in the conference. At Site C calls were made home when late slips were not returned and when parents' signatures did not look authentic. During parent-teacher conferences, parent signatures were verified, and parents were able to examine the teacher grade book to receive a list of all missing and late homework assignments. Further written notification of homework problems was made each quarter when the student progress report form was mailed home to the parent.

The cooperative learning component of the intervention was implemented at all three sites. However, because of the uniqueness of the settings (self-contained elementary, departmentalized middle school, and high school foreign language) the specifics of this intervention varied at each site.

At Site A students were placed into heterogeneous groups of three to four students at each laboratory station. All laboratory activities and many other assignments were designed using the BUILD model of cooperative learning (Appendix M). Individual accountability usually involved completing a homework assignment directly connected to the hands-on laboratory activity. Students processed the labs using metacognitive questions (Appendix I). Jigsawing techniques were also used for reading assignments.

At Site B, the students formed base groups called Homework Clubs. The groups were chosen by the researcher with input from the students. The researcher determined four main tasks that the club members were to perform on a rotating basis: homework checker, runner/absentees, assignment book monitor, and homework contact. Initially, the class was divided into six groups of four students and one group of three students. Each student received a schedule for the quarter indicating their Homework Club and assignment for the week. At the beginning of each day, the Homework Clubs met for five minutes to check and collect all homework assignments that were due for the entire day. Any student with missing homework was given a late slip to complete. Before lunch, all students with the task of assignment book monitor had their completed assignment books initialed by the researcher. At the end of the day, groups again met to check each other's assignment books, discuss the homework, and gather materials. After the first quarter, the groups reevaluated their performance. It was decided to eliminate the homework contact task of the group. For the second quarter, nine groups of three students each were formed.

Other cooperative lessons and activities were also implemented at Site B in addition to the base Homework Clubs. Of special note was the use of cooperative learning in literature circles as an integral part of the reading instruction (Appendix N). Another modification involved the use of cooperative learning research groups for a large multi-cultural, thematic research project. In past years, this project had been a totally individual assignment.

At Site C cooperative learning lessons were designed using the BUILD model and jigsaw technique. Each heterogeneous group had a section of the new material to learn and present to the other groups. Individual accountability for these lessons was demonstrated when students completed a homework assignment which integrated the new material presented from each group.

At all three sites metacognitive processing about homework completion occurred at least once per month using open-ended questions and stems (Appendix I). These stems served two purposes. First of all, they led students to analyze and take ownership of their individual successes and difficulties with homework completion. Secondly, they helped the researchers in their monitoring and adjusting of the intervention strategies by providing feedback about the homework being assigned and instructional techniques and strategies being used by the teachers. One of the major modifications in homework was to make the assignments relevant and purposeful. The students' responses to these metacognitive stems and questions were crucial in evaluating the teachers' progress toward that goal.

The final intervention of homework modification was by its very nature specific to each site. However, there were some definite consistencies. At all three sites, the researchers made a determined effort to state the purpose and relevancy of the assigned homework at least once per day. Also consistent at the three sites was the conscious limiting of homework assignments to not more than 20 minutes per subject per night. A general exception to this rule was reviewing before tests. A Learning Styles Inventory (Appendix H) was administered at all three sites to aid in the planning of homework assignments that utilized multiple intelligences and to increase student awareness of their individual learning styles. However, due to the differences in curriculum and educational settings, the modifications of actual assignments differed at each site.

At Site A, units were redesigned to include activities for the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learner. Included were pre-learning anticipation guides, reading and writing strategies, cooperative activities with an emphasis on positive group dynamics, graphic organizers to enhance the visual learners, and alternative assessments in rubric form to aid the kinesthetic learner. There was an emphasis on quality work and increase in metacognitive questions concerning the importance of homework. The researcher also spent time on goal setting with the students. Homework assignments were given that included parental involvement such as searching the kitchen for products containing acids.

At Site B, one of the biggest modifications made was in the way mathematics homework was assigned and evaluated. The researcher at Site B felt strongly that mathematics homework needed to be completed on time and corrected as necessary in order for mastery to occur. To that end, percentages were not given on daily homework assignments. Instead, assignments that were 90% correct or better received three points. Assignments that did not reach the goal of 90% received feedback and the notation to "try again." If the corrections were made by the next day and met the criterion of 90%, the assignment received two points. Students who were not successful in correcting their assignments the second time were required to conference with the teacher for help and then received one point. Any late assignment meant an automatic one point deduction and a late slip. If the late assignment did not come in the second day, the students received zero points for the assignment. A scale for each math chapter was set so that a student with an average of at least two and one-half points received an A, an average score of two points received a B, and an average of one point received a C. The homework grade was weighted as 30% of the total mathematics grade for the quarter. Another important change was the implementation of math challenge contracts for students who had tested out of all but three or less concepts on the pre-test. These students met part of every class period with parent volunteers and worked on high-level extension activities of the chapter concepts. At-risk students had assignments modified and were given extra support with homework. The learning-disabled students met in a small group led by the LD Resource Specialist after classroom instruction was completed.

To facilitate the inclusion of multiple intelligences in assigned homework, authentic assessment projects with rubrics were developed for each major social studies unit at Site B. An example of the choices and rubrics for the Egypt unit are found in Appendix O. In each case, specific successful parent interaction was planned for and included.

At Site C, homework modifications were evident in a variety of assignments. In addition to the workbook exercises designed to practice new Spanish vocabulary and grammar, students utilized their foreign language skills to write original paragraphs. These compositions incorporated their current vocabulary and grammar to focus on a real-life situation that the students may one day encounter. Making the Spanish language alive and relevant was the goal of each original paragraph. In addition to writing exercises, students were encouraged to share their knowledge with their families. As a Thanksgiving activity, the students used a cornucopia and added the food vocabulary to express their liking for their favorite foods. Then, to involve the parents in a Spanish homework activity, students were asked to share their cornucopia with their parents, brothers, and sisters over the Thanksgiving weekend. Another variation in homework was the use of graphic organizers (Appendix P) and learning logs which accompanied the culture section of each chapter of the textbook. These activities helped students to organize, understand, and appropriate the new information which otherwise may have been confusing or overwhelming. As at Site A, there was an emphasis on producing quality work in all types of assignments.

One additional intervention that was not initially planned but was later included was the use of reward days or activities for students who were successfully completing all of their homework. At Site A students earned "A" cards for every ten assignments completed with no late or missing work. These cards when attached to a homework assignment changed the previously earned grade to an A. Approximately every four weeks the team held incentive days for students who had all work completed. These incentives included movies, games, or activities planned by students and teachers. Students who were missing any assignments could not participate in the incentive days and were sent to the "dungeon" to work on their missing homework. In addition, Site A had a 100% Club. Students who never received a late slip for the entire quarter (100%) walked to McDonalds for lunch with the team teachers. At Site B, the students who had no late slips for one month walked with the teacher to Burger King for lunch. At Site C the researcher did not incorporate reward activities for homework completion. Such a reward system is not customary for college-bound students at the high school level.

## Presentation and Analysis of Project Results

Two major assessment tools were used to determine the efficacy of the interventions implemented in the project. The first assessment was a student survey administered in September (Appendix B) and then again in January after the intervention period. In January, 126 students were surveyed with 117 responding. Complete results of the January survey can be referenced in Appendix Q. In the student survey Question 11 specifically asked students how often they completed all of their assigned homework. Table 7 shows a comparison between responses before and after the intervention.

Table 7

Student Survey Responses to Question 11-How Often Do You Complete All of Your Homework?

| Site | No. of Responses | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A-September | 81 | 64 (79%) | 14 (17%) | 3 (4%) | 0 (0%) |
| A-January | 73 | 46 (63%) | 20 (27%) | 6 (8%) | 1 (1%) |
| B-September | 27 | 17 (63%) | 7 (26%) | 3 (11%) | 0 (0%) |
| B-January | 27 | 20 (74%) | 6 (22%) | 1 (4%) | 0 (0%) |
| C-September | 22 | 12 (55%) | 8 (36%) | 2 (9%) | 0 (0%) |
| C-January | 17 | 10 (59%) | 7 (41%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| September Total | 130 | 93 (72%) | 29 (22%) | 8 (6%) | 0 (0%) |
| January Total | 117 | 76 (65%) | 33 (28%) | 7 (6%) | 1 (1%) |

Although the overall average shows a decline from 72% to 65% of the students who said that they almost always completed their homework, the percentage of students who said they only often completed all of their homework increased from 22% to 28%. It would appear that approximately 6% of the students who responded "almost always" in September responded only "often" in January. The percentage of students who said that they only seldom completed all of their homework remained stationary at 6%, and there was an increase of 1% in the number of students who indicated that they never completed all of their homework. Figure 7 gives a graphic representation of this comparison.

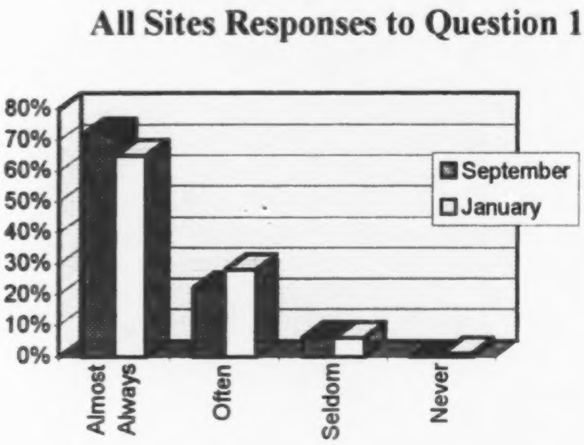

Figure 7. All Sites-Question 11 How Often Do You Complete All of Your Homework?

Further analysis indicates that there were very differing results among the sites. Site A, the middle school, was the only site to actually show a decrease from 79% in September to 63% in January. Sites B and C actually saw an increase in the number of students who said that they almost always completed all of their homework. At Site B the increase was 11%

and at Site C it was 4%. However, because Site A had the largest percentage of targeted students (62%) responding to the survey, the decrease at Site A made a major impact on the overall results.

Table 8

Number of Students per Day with Late Homework Assignments-After Interventions

| | Number of Students with Late Homework Assignments | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Day | Site A 82 Students | Site B 27 students | Site C 22 students | Total 131 students |
| 1 | 6 (7%) | 2 (7%) | 1 (5%) | 9 (7%) |
| 2 | 7 (9%) | 1 (4%) | 0 (0%) | 8 (6%) |
| 3 | 17 (21%) | 1 (4%) | 2 (9%) | 20 (15%) |
| 4 | 13 (16%) | 3 (11%) | 2 (9%) | 18 (14%) |
| 5 | 6 (7%) | 2 (7%) | 2 (9%) | 10 (13%) |
| 6 | 4 (5%) | 4 (15%) | 2 (9%) | 10 (13%) |
| 7 | 3 (4%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 3 (2%) |
| 8 | 12 (15%) | 0 (0%) | 3 (14%) | 15 (11%) |
| 9 | 17 (21%) | 1 (4%) | 4 (18%) | 22 (17%) |
| 10 | 8 (10%) | 4 (15%) | 1 (5%) | 13 (10%) |
| 11 | 14 (17%) | 1 (4%) | 5 (23%) | 20 (15%) |
| 12 | 9 (11%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (9%) | 11 (8%) |
| 13 | 12 (15%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (5%) | 13 (10%) |
| 14 | 16 (20%) | 4 (15%) | 1 (5%) | 21 (16%) |
| 15 | 4 (5%) | 1 (4%) | 4 (18%) | 9 (7%) |
| Average | 10 (12%) | 2 (7%) | 2 (9%) | 13 (10%) |

A second assessment tool was the comparison of the tabulation of late slips for a 15 day period at the beginning of September with a comparable period at the end of the semester in December and January. The data from the September period can be found in Table 3, Chapter 2, page 19. Table 8 gives the data for the 15 day period after the interventions.

Overall, there was a 7% drop (41% improvement) in the number of students per day with late slips recorded in the researchers' grade books between the September data and the January data. A comparison of the tabulated number of students with late slips in September and January is graphically illustrated in Figure 8. The chart more clearly demonstrates the differences in results at each of the sites. Site B had the biggest decrease (12%) in the percentage of students at the site with late slips. Site A also had a decrease, but only half as large (6%). Site C actually had no change at all in the percentage of students with late slips.

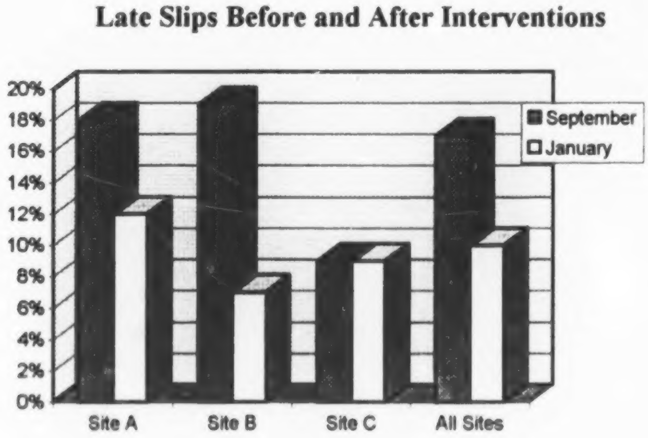

Figure 8. Percentage of Students With Late Slips in September and January

It is important to note the comparison between the students' perception of their homework completion and the actual number of late slips recorded in the researchers' grade books. Although 16% less students at Site A stated that they almost always completed all of their homework, there were actually 12% less students per day with late slips. At Site B, 11% more of the students indicated that they almost always completed all of their homework, and the decrease in the percentage of students with late slips was 12%. At Site C, 4% more of the targeted students indicated that they almost always completed their homework, but the actual percentage of students with late slips remained constant. Site A monitored only science homework completion, and Site C monitored only Spanish homework completion for the targeted students while Site B, a self-contained classroom, monitored all of the homework assigned to the targeted class. Thus, students completing the survey at Sites A and C would be indicating homework completion for all of their classes in Question 11, not just their science or Spanish classes where the specific interventions took place.

The project interventions were divided into three categories: increasing parental involvement in homework completion, including cooperative learning, and modifying homework. In order to assess the impact of each of these interventions, it is necessary to look at the student surveys and researchers' journals. Questions 4 and 5 of the student survey addressed the issue of parents asking about homework and actually helping with homework. The results of the surveys in both September and January are detailed in Figure 9.

According to the survey results the amount of parent involvement decreased rather than increased with respect to parents asking to see homework. The two categories of responses to be most indicative of any change would be the almost always and the never. The number of students indicating that their parents almost always ask to see their homework actually decreased from 19% in September to 7% in January while the never responses increased dramatically from 15% to 31%. Question 5 asked about the amount of help students received from their parents. The responses to this question seem to show no appreciable change in any of the four categories. An analysis of individual sites showed the same trend occurred at all three sites.

**Parental Responsibility Survey Questions**

Student Responses-September

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 4 | How often do your parents ask to see your homework? | A | 16 | 20% | 30 | 37% | 28 | 35% | 7 | 9% |
| | | B | 9 | 33% | 5 | 19% | 11 | 41% | 2 | 7% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 1 | 5% | 11 | 50% | 10 | 45% |
| | | All | 25 | 19% | 36 | 28% | 50 | 38% | 19 | 15% |
| 5 | How often do your parents help you with your homework? | A | 4 | 5% | 35 | 43% | 37 | 46% | 5 | 6% |
| | | B | 5 | 19% | 4 | 15% | 17 | 63% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 4 | 18% | 13 | 59% | 5 | 23% |
| | | All | 9 | 7% | 43 | 33% | 67 | 52% | 11 | 8% |

Student Responses - January

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 4 | How often do your parents ask to see your homework? | A | 4 | 5% | 26 | 36% | 26 | 36% | 17 | 23% |
| | | B | 4 | 15% | 7 | 26% | 10 | 37% | 6 | 22% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 4 | 24% | 13 | 76% |
| | | All | 8 | 7% | 33 | 28% | 40 | 34% | 36 | 31% |
| 5 | How often do your parents help you with your homework? | A | 8 | 11% | 24 | 33% | 34 | 47% | 7 | 10% |
| | | B | 1 | 4% | 8 | 30% | 16 | 59% | 2 | 7% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 3 | 18% | 9 | 53% | 5 | 29% |
| | | All | 9 | 8% | 35 | 30% | 59 | 50% | 14 | 12% |

Figure 9. Student Responses to Questions 4 & 5 Regarding Parental Involvement

Researcher journals support this data concerning no improvement in parental involvement and assistance with homework completion. At all sites, journal entries reflect disappointment with parent responses to repeated late slips for their children, progress reports indicating missing or late assignments, phone call contacts, and requests for parent-teacher conferences.

**Attitude Toward Homework Survey Questions**

Student Responses - September

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 12 | Completing my homework is important. | A | 56 | 72% | 21 | 27% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 21 | 81% | 5 | 19% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 15 | 68% | 6 | 27% | 1 | 5% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 92 | 73% | 32 | 25% | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| 19 | If I spent more time on my homework my grades would improve. | A | 20 | 24% | 42 | 51% | 14 | 17% | 6 | 7% |
| | | B | 15 | 58% | 5 | 19% | 6 | 23% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 5 | 23% | 9 | 41% | 7 | 32% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 40 | 31% | 56 | 43% | 27 | 21% | 7 | 5% |

Student Responses - January

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 12 | Completing my homework is important. | A | 50 | 68% | 20 | 27% | 2 | 3% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 24 | 89% | 3 | 11% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 6 | 35% | 11 | 65% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 80 | 68% | 34 | 29% | 2 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| 19 | If I spent more time on my homework my grades would improve. | A | 34 | 47% | 24 | 33% | 13 | 18% | 2 | 3% |
| | | B | 13 | 48% | 9 | 33% | 3 | 11% | 2 | 7% |
| | | C | 7 | 41% | 10 | 59% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 54 | 46% | 43 | 37% | 16 | 14% | 4 | 3% |

Figure 10. Questions 12 & 19 Regarding Student Attitudes Toward Homework

The objective of the cooperative learning and homework modification interventions was to improve student attitudes about and responsibility for homework completion. Student attitude was surveyed in Questions 12 and 19. Figure 10 shows a comparison between September and January responses to these two questions.

An analysis of the data indicates basically no change in the students' attitudes toward the importance of completing homework. In September 98% and in January 97% of the students strongly agreed or agreed that completing their homework was important. There was, however, a distinct improvement in the responses to Question 19 regarding the effect homework completion has on achievement. In September only 74% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that spending more time on homework would improve their grades. In January 83%, or an increase of 9%, strongly agreed or agreed.

Questions 3, 6, 7, 8, and 10 from the student survey were concerned with student responsibility for homework completion. A comparison of the student responses in September and January are found in Figure 11. An analysis of the overall data grouping the almost always and often category versus the seldom and never shows very little differences between the two surveys. For Question 3 there was a decrease of 5%, for Question 6 there was an increase of l%, for Question 7 a decrease of 6%, and for Question 10 there was no change at all. However, an analysis of the data from each site does reveal some significant differences with respect to Questions 3 and 10. Question 3 asked students how often they used their assignment notebooks. At Site A there was a decrease from 95% of the students in September indicating they almost always or often used their assignment notebooks to 87% in January. Site C saw an even bigger decrease from 82% in September to only 59% in January.

**Student Responsibility Survey Questions**

Student Responses - September

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 3 | How often do you use your assignment notebook? | A | 68 | 84% | 9 | 11% | 3 | 4% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 14 | 52% | 6 | 22% | 6 | 22% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 13 | 59% | 5 | 23% | 3 | 14% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 95 | 73% | 20 | 15% | 12 | 9% | 3 | 2% |
| 6 | How often do you have the necessary supplies to complete your homework? | A | 54 | 68% | 20 | 25% | 4 | 5% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 14 | 52% | 12 | 44% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 16 | 73% | 6 | 27% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 84 | 66% | 38 | 30% | 5 | 4% | 1 | 1% |
| 7 | How often do you do your homework at the same time every day? | A | 31 | 38% | 34 | 42% | 11 | 14% | 5 | 6% |
| | | B | 7 | 26% | 10 | 37% | 8 | 30% | 2 | 7% |
| | | C | 3 | 14% | 12 | 55% | 6 | 27% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 41 | 32% | 56 | 43% | 25 | 19% | 8 | 6% |
| 8 | How often do you do your homework in the same place every day? | A | 39 | 49% | 25 | 31% | 11 | 14% | 5 | 6% |
| | | B | 12 | 48% | 7 | 28% | 5 | 20% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 9 | 41% | 9 | 41% | 4 | 18% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 60 | 47% | 41 | 32% | 20 | 16% | 6 | 5% |
| 10 | How often do you use the time given in class to work on homework? | A | 43 | 53% | 27 | 33% | 8 | 10% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 15 | 58% | 9 | 35% | 2 | 8% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 9 | 41% | 9 | 41% | 3 | 14% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 67 | 52% | 45 | 35% | 13 | 10% | 4 | 3% |

Student Responses - January

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | How often do you use your assignment notebook? | A | 58 | 79% | 6 | 8% | 7 | 10% | 2 | 3% |
| | | B | 17 | 63% | 6 | 22% | 2 | 7% | 2 | 7% |
| | | C | 7 | 41% | 3 | 18% | 5 | 29% | 2 | 12% |
| | | All | 82 | 70% | 15 | 13% | 14 | 12% | 6 | 5% |
| 6 | How often do you have the necessary supplies to complete your homework? | A | 43 | 59% | 29 | 40% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 18 | 67% | 9 | 33% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 5 | 29% | 10 | 59% | 2 | 12% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 66 | 56% | 48 | 41% | 2 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| 7 | How often do you do your homework at the same time every day? | A | 28 | 38% | 28 | 38% | 13 | 18% | 4 | 5% |
| | | B | 7 | 26% | 6 | 22% | 13 | 48% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 2 | 12% | 9 | 53% | 6 | 35% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 37 | 32% | 43 | 37% | 32 | 27% | 5 | 4% |

Figure 11. Responses to Questions 3, 6, 7, 8, & 10 Regarding Student Responsibility

**Student Responsibility Survey Questions**

Student Responses - January

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 8 | How often do you do your homework in the same place every day? | A | 36 | 49% | 22 | 30% | 13 | 18% | 2 | 3% |
| | | B | 13 | 48% | 10 | 37% | 4 | 15% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 4 | 24% | 10 | 59% | 3 | 18% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 53 | 45% | 42 | 36% | 20 | 17% | 2 | 2% |
| 10 | How often do you use the time given in class to work on homework? | A | 41 | 56% | 23 | 32% | 6 | 8% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 15 | 56% | 7 | 26% | 4 | 15% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 12 | 71% | 4 | 24% | 1 | 6% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 68 | 58% | 34 | 29% | 11 | 9% | 4 | 3% |

Figure 11. (continued)

Site B, however, showed an increase in student use of assignment notebooks from 74% in September to 85% in January. Question 10 asked how often students used their class time to begin work on homework assignments. Again there was a significant difference. At Sites A and C, there was an increase of 2% and 13% respectively, while at Site B there was a decrease of 11%.

Question 23 regarding activities that regularly take priority over homework was also important for assessing any change in student priorities. A comparison of the results from the September and January surveys are given in Table 9. An analysis of Table 9 indicates that homework was even less of a priority for students in January than it was in September. In September 61% of the students surveyed said that three or more activities regularly took priority over homework. In January the percentage rose to 74%, an increase of 13%.

Table 9

Student Responses to Question 23-Number of Activities that Take Priority over Homework

| No. of Activities | 0 | 1-2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | 9-10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A - September<br>79 students | 9 (11%) | 29 (37%) | 23 (29%) | 8 (10%) | 5 (6%) | 5 (6%) |
| Site A - January<br>73 students | 6 (8%) | 13 (18%) | 29 (40%) | 19 (26%) | 3 (4%) | 3 (4%) |
| Site B - September<br>26 students | 2 (8%) | 10 (38%) | 6 (23%) | 5 (19%) | 2 (8%) | 1 (4%) |
| Site B - January<br>27 students | 2 (7%) | 7 (26%) | 7 (26%) | 7 (26%) | 2 (7%) | 2 (7%) |
| Site C - September<br>22 students | 1 (5%) | 0 (0%) | 9 (41%) | 8 (36%) | 4 (18%) | 0 (0%) |
| Site C - January<br>17 students | 0 (0%) | 2 (12%) | 10 (59%) | 4 (24%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (6%) |
| Total - September<br>127 students | 12 (9%) | 39 (31%) | 38 (30%) | 21 (17%) | 11 (9%) | 6 (5%) |
| Total - January<br>117 students | 8 (7%) | 22 (19%) | 46 (39%) | 30 (26%) | 5 (4%) | 6 (5%) |

Questions 14-18, and 9 of the student survey were used to assess the success of teacher modifications for improving homework completion. Figure 12 shows a comparison of the results from the September and January surveys regarding these questions. An analysis of the data indicates two areas of significance. One is Question 14 regarding the difficulty of the homework assigned. Overall, there was a decrease from 14% to 9% of the targeted students

**Teacher Responsibility Survey Questions**

Student Responses - September

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 14 | The homework I have is usually too difficult for me. | A | 5 | 7% | 5 | 7% | 51 | 67% | 15 | 20% |
| | | B | 0 | 0% | 4 | 16% | 11 | 44% | 10 | 40% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 3 | 14% | 16 | 73% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 5 | 4% | 12 | 10% | 78 | 63% | 28 | 23% |
| 15 | The homework I have is usually challenging enough for me. | A | 13 | 16% | 52 | 65% | 13 | 16% | 2 | 3% |
| | | B | 5 | 19% | 16 | 62% | 4 | 15% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 2 | 9% | 17 | 77% | 2 | 9% | 1 | 5% |
| | | All | 20 | 16% | 85 | 66% | 19 | 15% | 4 | 3% |
| 16 | I have too much homework. | A | 19 | 23% | 15 | 18% | 42 | 51% | 6 | 7% |
| | | B | 2 | 8% | 5 | 19% | 15 | 58% | 4 | 15% |
| | | C | 3 | 14% | 10 | 45% | 9 | 41% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 24 | 18% | 30 | 23% | 66 | 51% | 10 | 8% |
| 17 | Homework has a purpose and is not busy work. | A | 22 | 27% | 40 | 49% | 10 | 12% | 9 | 11% |
| | | B | 6 | 23% | 19 | 73% | 1 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 4 | 18% | 11 | 50% | 4 | 18% | 3 | 14% |
| | | All | 32 | 25% | 70 | 54% | 15 | 12% | 12 | 9% |
| 18 | My teacher should give me feed back on my homework. | A | 42 | 55% | 25 | 33% | 6 | 8% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 7 | 27% | 16 | 62% | 2 | 8% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 12 | 55% | 10 | 45% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 61 | 49% | 51 | 41% | 8 | 6% | 4 | 3% |
| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 9 | How often do your feel you have clear directions for your homework? | A | 24 | 30% | 47 | 58% | 8 | 10% | 2 | 2% |
| | | B | 7 | 26% | 12 | 44% | 8 | 30% | 0 | 0% |
| | | C | 4 | 18% | 13 | 59% | 5 | 23% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 35 | 27% | 72 | 55% | 21 | 16% | 2 | 2% |

Figure 12. Questions 14-18, & 9 Regarding Teacher Responsibility

**Teacher Responsibility Survey Questions**

Student Responses - January

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
| 14 | The homework I have is usually too difficult for me. | A | 4 | 5% | 3 | 4% | 55 | 75% | 11 | 15% |
| | | B | 0 | 0% | 3 | 11% | 16 | 59% | 8 | 30% |
| | | C | 0 | 0% | 1 | 6% | 12 | 71% | 4 | 24% |
| | | All | 4 | 3% | 7 | 6% | 83 | 71% | 23 | 20% |
| 15 | The homework I have is usually challenging enough for me. | A | 18 | 25% | 42 | 58% | 10 | 14% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 5 | 19% | 19 | 70% | 1 | 4% | 2 | 7% |
| | | C | 1 | 6% | 11 | 65% | 5 | 29% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 24 | 21% | 72 | 62% | 16 | 14% | 5 | 4% |
| 16 | I have too much homework. | A | 17 | 23% | 27 | 37% | 25 | 34% | 4 | 5% |
| | | B | 8 | 30% | 9 | 33% | 7 | 26% | 3 | 11% |
| | | C | 5 | 29% | 4 | 24% | 8 | 47% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 30 | 26% | 40 | 34% | 40 | 34% | 7 | 6% |
| 17 | Homework has a purpose and is not busy work. | A | 19 | 26% | 38 | 52% | 8 | 11% | 8 | 11% |
| | | B | 6 | 22% | 14 | 52% | 6 | 22% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 3 | 18% | 9 | 53% | 4 | 24% | 1 | 6% |
| | | All | 28 | 24% | 61 | 52% | 18 | 15% | 10 | 9% |
| 18 | My teacher should give me feed back on my homework. | A | 32 | 44% | 35 | 48% | 5 | 7% | 1 | 1% |
| | | B | 14 | 52% | 10 | 37% | 2 | 7% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 10 | 59% | 5 | 29% | 2 | 12% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 56 | 48% | 50 | 43% | 9 | 8% | 2 | 2% |

| No. | Survey Question | Site | Survey Responses | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Almost Always | | Often | | Seldom | | Never | |
| 9 | How often do your feel you have clear directions for your homework? | A | 14 | 19% | 44 | 60% | 12 | 16% | 3 | 4% |
| | | B | 10 | 37% | 14 | 52% | 2 | 7% | 1 | 4% |
| | | C | 5 | 29% | 10 | 59% | 2 | 12% | 0 | 0% |
| | | All | 29 | 25% | 68 | 58% | 16 | 36% | 4 | 8% |

Figure 12. (continued)

who indicated that their homework was too difficult for them. Question 16 also showed a significant change from September to January. When asked whether they had too much homework, there was a dramatic increase in the number of strongly agree and agree responses. In September only 41% of the students strongly agreed or agreed that they had too much homework. However, in January 60% of the students, or an increase of 19%, felt they had too much homework.

Questions 1 and 2 of the student survey addressed how much time students were spending nightly on homework and in how many subjects. Table 10 illustrates the data from Question 1. The student responses to Question 1 concerning the amount of time spent on homework nightly did show a significant increase. In September only 37% of the students indicated that they had more than one hour of homework per night. In January over 52% of the students indicated that they had more than one hour of homework per night.

Table 10

Results of Student Homework Survey Question 1 Regarding Time Spent on Homework

| Site | Month | No. of Students | Less than 1/2 hour | 1/2 to 1 hour | 1 to 1 1/2 hours | 1 1/2 to 2 hours | more than 2 hours |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | September | 80 | 7 (9%) | 47 (59%) | 16 (20%) | 7 (9%) | 3 (4%) |
| A | January | 73 | 5 (7%) | 22 (30%) | 24 (33%) | 17 (23%) | 5 (7%) |
| B | September | 27 | 4 (15%) | 14 (52%) | 6 (22%) | 3 (11%) | 0 (0%) |
| B | January | 27 | 1 (4%) | 17 (63%) | 5 (19%) | 3 (11%) | 1 (4%) |
| C | September | 22 | 2 (9%) | 8 (36%) | 9 (41%) | 1 (5%) | 2 (9%) |
| C | January | 17 | 4 (24%) | 7 (41%) | 4 (24%) | 1 (6%) | 1 (6%) |
| All | September | 129 | 13 (10%) | 69 (53%) | 31 (24%) | 11 (9%) | 5 (4%) |
| All | January | 117 | 10 (9%) | 46 (39%) | 33 (28%) | 21 (18%) | 7 (6%) |

Question 2 asked in how many subjects per night students regularly had homework. The results from this question are found in Table 11. As with Question 1, the student responses to Question 2 also showed an increase. In September only 30% of the students had homework in more than three subjects. In January, 42% of the students had homework in more than three subjects. The student responses concerning the amount of homework seem to correlate with the student responses for Question 16 regarding having too much homework.

Table 11

Results of Student Survey Question 2 Regarding Subjects Per Night With Homework

| Site | Month | No. of Students | 0-1 | 2-3 | 4-5 | 6-7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | September | 81 | 0 (0%) | 56 (69%) | 24 (30%) | 1 (1%) |
| A | January | 73 | 0 (0%) | 36 (49%) | 37 (51%) | 0 (0%) |
| B | September | 27 | 4 (15%) | 20 (74%) | 3 (11%) | 0 (0%) |
| B | January | 27 | 3 (1%) | 17 (63%) | 7 (26%) | 0 (0%) |
| C | September | 22 | 1 (5%) | 10 (45%) | 11 (50%) | 0 (0%) |
| C | January | 17 | 1 (6%) | 11 (65%) | 5 (29%) | 0 (0%) |
| All | September | 130 | 5 (4%) | 86 (66%) | 38 (29%) | 1 (1%) |
| All | January | 117 | 4 (3%) | 64 (55%) | 49 (42%) | 0 (0%) |

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data, overall the students did show improvement in homework completion. The researchers at all three sites saw a steady, positive progression of improvement in quality of work and quantity of work completion.

However, the amount of the improvement was not as significant as the researchers expected considering the amount of interventions implemented. There was a group of "hard core" students at all sites who consistently did not turn in work despite the interventions implemented. The researchers felt that these students had developed a negative pattern of homework completion over the course of their schooling. At Sites A and C the students received the interventions for only one class period per day. This amounted to less than 70 hours of class intervention to counteract four or more years of poor habits of homework completion. Site B had a more significant improvement in homework completion. Being a self-contained classroom, the students had consistent interventions throughout the entire school day.

There did appear to be a difference between the targeted students' perceptions of their homework completion and the actual improvement in homework completion tabulated by the researchers. One major contributor to this discrepancy may again be the different contexts of the sites. At Sites A and C students responding to the homework survey questions were evaluating their homework completion for all of their homework assignments in all subject areas not just homework assigned in the targeted subject areas of science and Spanish. A case may be made from this that the interventions were actually more successful because the students perceived themselves as completing less homework in all their subjects combined. For example, at Site A, 16% less of the students indicated that they almost always completed all of their homework. However, there were actually 6% fewer students per day with late assignments. At Site B, the self-contained elementary classroom, the teacher-researcher assigned almost all of the total daily homework so that the homework assignments being evaluated for completion by both the students and the teacher were basically identical. At Site B, the correlation between student perceptions and actual tabulated data was high. In January, 11% more of the students indicated that they almost always completed all of their homework while there were 12% less students per day with late assignments. At Site C in January, although 4% more of the students responded that they almost always completed all of their homework, there was no difference in the percentage of students with late assignments as evidenced by the late slips. Because the researcher at Site C surveyed the students at the beginning of the second semester, but actually tabulated late slips at the end of the first, any significant change in the targeted students between first and second semester would have an effect on the data. Four students failed and one moved after the first semester. Therefore, those students' perceptions of homework completion were not included in the results of the January survey. The four students who failed had experienced difficulty in completing homework assignments on time. Therefore, their responses on the January survey would have greatly affected the percentage of students who only often or seldom completed their homework assignments.

The researchers feel that it is difficult to assess the impact each individual intervention had on the total outcome of the project because parent, teacher, and student factors all interact to affect homework completion. However, some generalizations can be drawn.

Evidenced by the survey responses, it would seem that the intervention to increase parental involvement was not successful. Many different notices, tips, reminders, progress reports, and information about deadlines and project due dates were sent to aid the parents. Whether these were read or utilized is not known. In one case at Site A, the homework tips sent home were returned to the teacher with the signed progress report. In another case at Site C, one parent could not remember if he received a written request for a parent conference. The researcher at Site B did feel there was a little more support from parents. Out of 27 family units, only two did not show up for curriculum night, and at least one parent, and in many cases, both parents attended parent-teacher conferences in November and February. Many parents indicated that they were pleased with the fact that they did not have to be concerned about their child's homework completion because the students were not bringing home late slips. Therefore, another interpretation of the data at Site B could be that the parents were not asking about homework or checking on homework because they felt that their children were successfully completing assignments without their monitoring. Also, at Site B the intermediate grades' policy is to send home weekly folders of all student work that must be signed by the parents. Thus parents were able to effectively monitor not only whether their children were having late homework through the late slips, but also the quality of the work being completed on a weekly basis.

The researchers felt generally that the teacher directed interventions of cooperative learning, metacognition, and homework modifications were successful in improving the quality and quantity of assignments completed. Although the students' responses to teacher responsibility questions in the survey did not demonstrate much difference between September and January, there were other indicators of improvement. Metacognitive stems at all three sites indicated students were more concerned about the quality of their work and improving their homework completion. The students' responses also showed an increased understanding of the relevance of their homework assignments and connection with improved achievement.

At Site B throughout the intervention period, students consistently stated that the Homework Club was the most important tool in helping them improve their homework completion. The fact that Site B was the only site at which more students indicated they were consistently using their assignment books is further evidence that the Homework Club activities were effective in changing student behavior. Besides general metacognitive stems, the metacognitive processing after cooperative learning activities also indicated positive student reactions and increased motivation and understanding. In addition, researcher journal entries indicated the positive influence cooperative learning had on homework completion.

This overall change in student understanding of the importance of improving their homework completion was also supported by the students' responses to Survey Question 19 which stated, "If I spent more time on my homework, my grades would improve." There was a significant increase of 9% of the students who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Yet, the increase in the number of activities that regularly took priority over homework was disturbing. The researchers feel that this is another indication of a lack of parental support. Certainly at the sixth grade level of Sites A and B, parents still should be playing an important role in setting time priorities for their children. At all three sites, students seem to be over-committed with classes, sports, and other activities so that even though students understand the importance of homework, they do not have the time set aside to do the work. Based on the survey results, parents also do not seem to be setting limits on social activities.

As part of the homework modifications implemented, the researchers were to limit the homework assigned to 20 minutes per subject per night. The initial analysis of the student surveys would seem to indicate that the researchers did not carry out this intervention.

However, a closer examination of the data reveals just the opposite. At Sites A and C the researchers assigned the targeted students homework in only one subject/class period per day. Since in the survey the students were responding about homework in all of their classes, the survey responses do not accurately represent the amount of homework assigned in just the targeted classrooms. At Site B, 18 out of 27 students stated that they spent less than 1 hour on homework per night. Since 5 major academic subjects are taught per day, at 20 minutes per subject this would amount to approximately 1 1/2 hour of homework per night. Since 83% of the students indicated they spent 1 1/2 hour or less on homework per night, the researcher felt that the intervention had been successfully implemented. It was interesting to note that 12 of the 18 students who said that they had less than 1 hour of homework per night also responded that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they had too much homework.

Another important homework modification was the incorporation of multiple-intelligences in the homework assigned. In the past, most homework assignments were often limited to two intelligences: verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical. The researchers made a deliberate decision to include other types of intelligences (visual-spatial, interpersonal, and bodily-kinesthetic) in homework assignments. Student responses on metacognitive stems evaluating these "new" types of homework assignments were favorable.

The researchers felt the assessment tools used were generally reliable, well-written, and probed numerous areas of homework completion. However, there were two areas that could be improved. In the student survey the researchers felt they should have added the additional question, "Do your parents express to you that completing homework is important?" This question would help more clearly assess the impact of parental involvement interventions. Secondly at Sites A and C, in addition to the general questions regarding homework, there should have been parallel questions concerning just the targeted classrooms. For example, Question 1 should have asked, "How much time per night do you spend on homework in all your classes?" and should have been followed by, "How much time per night do you spend on homework in this class?"

This project has great significance for our schools. The background historical research supported and emphasized the three major forms of interventions utilized by the researchers. Results from this project reinforce and validate the need to improve parental involvement, increase cooperative learning and metacognition, and modify homework assignments in order to improve homework completion. The action research data found these interventions to be successful for the majority of students. The researchers feel that although there will always be students in the at-risk category, the interventions implemented lowered the number of students in that group. The fact that there was a significant decrease in the students who felt their homework was too difficult for them supports this conclusion. The challenge our schools face is to encourage more teachers and administrators to consistently incorporate these techniques into every classroom. Consistency among teachers and follow-through seem to be keys in reaching the majority of students.

With the tremendous changes in family structure that have occurred in society over the past two decades, the need to encourage and improve parental support and involvement is extremely important. This project would indicate that education in general must find a more effective way to accomplish this goal. The usual methods of communication, even at the high level of quantity and consistency implemented at the sites, does not seem to be enough. It is time for more creative techniques and strategies to be developed.

The literature emphasized that more and better research about homework must be conducted. The researchers support this wholeheartedly. One recommendation would be to set up an actual controlled experiment comparing two classrooms, one implementing the described interventions, the other not. Another source of inquiry should be an in-depth study of the at-risk students whom this project were unable to affect. A better understanding of what motivations and strategies are needed to improve their homework completion is necessary.

The results from this project lead logically to specific recommendations. First of all, a summary of the results and conclusions reached from this project should be presented to the faculty at each site for review and discussion. Although this seems obvious, it not routinely done. At Site B, three colleagues have completed action research projects in the last two years, but not one piece of information regarding the scope and results of the projects have been formally or informally shared with the faculty as a whole. At Site C there are not even regular departmental meetings. Secondly, the middle school and high school settings need to incorporate a base group concept as implemented at Site B. The traditional home room period at the beginning of school could be replaced with two homework base group periods, one at the beginning and one at the end of the school day. A third recommendation especially for the middle school and high school is to have greater teacher collaboration in order to limit the total amount of homework given to students. A fourth recommendation for all sites is to institute a mandatory after school study club for at-risk students. During this time students could work on homework assignments with a teacher available for help. A final recommendation is for the administration to set up a task-force of parents, administrators, and teachers to tackle the issue of improving parental support and involvement and to create more innovative and effective ways to accomplish this very important goal.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A

## Parent Information Letter

September, 1997

Dear Parents,

During this school year, I am conducting an action research project as part of my Master's Degree Program. As a result of extensive research and experience as well as interviews with other educators, I have decided to focus on homework completion and its effects on academic achievement. A necessary starting point for this research project is gathering current information from both students and parents. Your child will be given an anonymous survey to be completed during class time. Attached is a parent survey for your completion. To maintain validity in the research, please do not include your name on the survey. Your perspective is extremely valuable and important for a complete understanding of this academic issue. I would appreciate your prompt response and return of the survey.

Thank you for your help with this important project. I will share the results with you as they become available.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Amy Wanic

# Appendix B

## Student Homework Survey-September

In order for this school year to be as successful as it can be, I would like information about your homework habits. Please be as accurate as possible in your answers.

CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1. How much time per night do you spend on homework?

| | ☐ less than 1/2 hr. | ☐ 1/2 to 1 hr. | ☐ 1 to 1 1/2 hrs. | ☐ 1 1/2 to 2 hrs. | ☐ more than 2 hrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 7 | 47 | 16 | 7 | 3 |
| Site B: | 4 | 14 | 6 | 3 | 0 |
| Site C: | 2 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 2 |

2. In how many subjects per night do you usually have homework?

| | ☐ 0-1 | ☐ 2-3 | ☐ 4-5 | ☐ 6-7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 0 | 56 | 24 | 1 |
| Site B: | 4 | 20 | 3 | 0 |
| Site C: | 1 | 10 | 11 | 0 |

FOR THE QUESTIONS BELOW USE THE FOLLOWING RATING SCALE:

| | | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. How often do you use your assignment notebook? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 68 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 14 | 6 | 6 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 13 | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| 4. How often do your parents ask to see your homework? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 16 | 30 | 28 | 7 |
| | Site B: | 9 | 5 | 11 | 2 |
| | Site C: | 0 | 1 | 11 | 10 |
| 5. How often do your parents help you with your homework? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 4 | 35 | 37 | 5 |
| | Site B: | 5 | 4 | 17 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 0 | 4 | 13 | 5 |

## Appendix B Continued

6. How often do you have the necessary supplies to complete your homework?

| | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 54 | 20 | 4 | 1 |
| Site B: | 14 | 12 | 4 | 0 |
| Site C: | 16 | 6 | 0 | 0 |

7. How often do you do your homework at the same time every day?

| | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 31 | 43 | 11 | 5 |
| Site B: | 7 | 10 | 8 | 2 |
| Site C: | 3 | 12 | 6 | 1 |

8. How often do you do your homework in the same place every day?

| | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 39 | 25 | 11 | 5 |
| Site B: | 12 | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| Site C: | 9 | 9 | 4 | 0 |

9. How often do you feel you have clear directions for your homework?

| | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 24 | 47 | 8 | 2 |
| Site B: | 7 | 12 | 8 | 0 |
| Site C: | 4 | 13 | 5 | 0 |

10. How often do you use the time given in class to work on homework?

| | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 43 | 27 | 8 | 3 |
| Site B: | 15 | 9 | 2 | 0 |
| Site C: | 9 | 9 | 3 | 1 |

11. How often do you complete all of your homework?

| | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 64 | 14 | 3 | 0 |
| Site B: | 17 | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| Site C: | 12 | 8 | 2 | 0 |

FOR THE STATEMENTS BELOW USE THE FOLLOWING RATING SCALE:

12. Completing my homework is important.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 56 | 21 | 0 | 0 |
| Site B: | 21 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Site C: | 15 | 6 | 1 | 0 |

## Appendix B Continued

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. The amount of time I spend on homework is sufficient. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 32 | 46 | 4 | 0 |
| Site B: | 8 | 17 | 1 | 0 |
| Site C: | 5 | 15 | 2 | 0 |
| 14. The homework I have is usually too difficult for me. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 5 | 5 | 51 | 15 |
| Site B: | 0 | 4 | 11 | 10 |
| Site C: | 0 | 3 | 16 | 3 |
| 15. The homework I have is usually challenging enough for me. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 13 | 52 | 13 | 2 |
| Site B: | 5 | 16 | 4 | 1 |
| Site C: | 2 | 17 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. I have too much homework. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 19 | 15 | 42 | 6 |
| Site B: | 2 | 5 | 15 | 4 |
| Site C: | 3 | 10 | 9 | 0 |
| 17. Homework has a purpose and is not busywork. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 22 | 40 | 10 | 9 |
| Site B: | 6 | 19 | 1 | 0 |
| Site C: | 4 | 11 | 4 | 3 |
| 18. My teacher should give me feedback on my homework. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 42 | 25 | 6 | 3 |
| Site B: | 7 | 16 | 2 | 1 |
| Site C: | 12 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 19. If I spent more time on homework my grades would improve. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 20 | 42 | 14 | 6 |
| Site B: | 15 | 5 | 6 | 0 |
| Site C: | 5 | 9 | 7 | 1 |
| 20. Completing my homework makes me more prepared for class activities. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 38 | 34 | 7 | 2 |
| Site B: | 13 | 11 | 1 | 1 |
| Site C: | 7 | 11 | 3 | 1 |

## Appendix B Continued

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. I have good study skills. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 13 | 51 | 13 | 4 |
| Site B: | 3 | 19 | 4 | 0 |
| Site C: | 4 | 12 | 3 | 3 |
| 22. I have the organizational skills to complete my homework. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Site A: | 28 | 38 | 11 | 4 |
| Site B: | 6 | 18 | 2 | 0 |
| Site C: | 8 | 10 | 4 | 0 |

23. Which of the following activities regularly take priority over homework time?
(Check all that apply)

☐ athletics
Site A: 39
Site B: 14
Site C: 18

☐ church
Site A: 12
Site B: 4
Site C: 2

☐ computer
Site A: 13
Site B: 6
Site C: 5

☐ family
Site A: 33
Site B: 10
Site C: 16

☐ friends
Site A: 39
Site B: 14
Site C: 17

☐ jobs
Site A: 26
Site B: 4
Site C: 10

☐ music
Site A: 19
Site B: 9
Site C: 6

☐ phone
Site A: 19
Site B: 6
Site C: 9

☐ television
Site A: 35
Site B: 10
Site C: 9

☐ other
Site A: 15
Site B: 5
Site C: 12

Thank you!

## Appendix C

## Parent Homework Survey

CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1. On the average, how much time per night does your child spend on homework?

| ☐ less than 1/2 hr. | ☐ 1/2 to 1 hr. | ☐ 1 to 1 1/2 hrs. | ☐ 1 1/2 to 2 hrs. | ☐ more than 2 hrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: 4 | Site A: 30 | Site A: 27 | Site A: 13 | Site A: 2 |
| Site B: 3 | Site B: 13 | Site B: 8 | Site B: 0 | Site B: 2 |
| Site C: 2 | Site C: 9 | Site C: 6 | Site C: 5 | Site C: 0 |

2. In how many subjects per night does your child usually have homework?

| ☐ 0-1 | ☐ 2-3 | ☐ 4-5 | ☐ 6-7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: 1 | Site A: 59 | Site A: 14 | Site A: 1 |
| Site B: 2 | Site B: 19 | Site B: 5 | Site B: 0 |
| Site C: 2 | Site C: 15 | Site C: 5 | Site C: 0 |

| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. I am aware of my child's homework assignments. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 33 | 40 | 2 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 9 | 15 | 2 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 0 | 16 | 3 | 3 |
| 4. I often ask to see my child's homework. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 39 | 27 | 10 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 11 | 11 | 4 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 1 | 7 | 11 | 3 |
| 5. I often discuss homework with my child. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 34 | 35 | 5 | 0 |
| | Site B: | 11 | 13 | 2 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 3 | 10 | 9 | 0 |
| 6. My child has a certain time set aside for homework. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 33 | 27 | 12 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 5 | 12 | 8 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 3 | 9 | 7 | 3 |
| 7. My child has a specific place to do homework. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 31 | 36 | 9 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 12 | 8 | 6 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 5 | 14 | 3 | 0 |

## Appendix C Continued

8. Completing homework is important.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 65 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Site B: | 25 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Site C: | 20 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

9. The amount of time spent on homework is sufficient.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 18 | 52 | 7 | 2 |
| Site B: | 8 | 12 | 4 | 1 |
| Site C: | 2 | 10 | 7 | 3 |

10. The assigned homework is at an appropriate level of difficulty.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 15 | 57 | 5 | 0 |
| Site B: | 8 | 16 | 1 | 1 |
| Site C: | 2 | 18 | 2 | 0 |

11. Overall, my child has too much homework.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 3 | 5 | 59 | 10 |
| Site B: | 1 | 1 | 19 | 4 |
| Site C: | 0 | 0 | 17 | 5 |

12. The assigned homework has a purpose and is not just busywork.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 16 | 56 | 4 | 0 |
| Site B: | 10 | 15 | 1 | 0 |
| Site C: | 6 | 14 | 2 | 0 |

13. Teachers should give prompt feedback on homework.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 48 | 28 | 2 | 0 |
| Site B: | 16 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Site C: | 13 | 7 | 2 | 0 |

14. Homework completion affects the final grade.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 42 | 33 | 0 | 1 |
| Site B: | 17 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Site C: | 12 | 9 | 1 | 0 |

15. My child has good study skills.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 19 | 45 | 10 | 3 |
| Site B: | 6 | 12 | 8 | 0 |
| Site C: | 4 | 11 | 7 | 0 |

16. My child has the organizational skills necessary to successfully complete homework.

| | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: | 17 | 43 | 14 | 3 |
| Site B: | 5 | 18 | 2 | 1 |
| Site C: | 5 | 14 | 3 | 0 |

## Appendix D

## Teacher Survey

The following survey is part of my Action Research Project in graduate school. My topic is the effects of homework completion on academic performance. I would appreciate your taking the time to fill out this survey. Please return it to my mailbox at your earliest convenience.

Thank you.

1. Grade level you teach:

6th 22 8th 14 10th 15 12th 15
7th 16 9th 15 11th 16

Note: For the questions below, data from Site A is given first. Data from Site C is in parentheses.

1. Type of homework most frequently given (you may check more than one):

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| practice | 14 (9) | worksheets | 16 (12) |
| reinforcement | 24 (17) | projects | 20 (8) |
| preparation | 12 (6) | writing | 2 (2) |
| reading | 12 (15) | lab reports | 1 (2) |

2. Do you grade all homework assignments?

yes 20 (17) no 14 ( 6)

4. Time between homework assignment and the teacher response to homework:

| | |
|---|---|
| next day | 23 (16) |
| end of week | 15 (9) |
| not returned at all | 0 (0) |

5. Do you see lack of homework completion as a problem in your classes?

| | |
|---|---|
| major problem | 6 (5) |
| minor problem | 25 (18) |
| no problem | 3 (0) |

## Appendix D Continued

6. Do you see lack of homework completion affecting student grades?

major effect 24 (18)  minor effect 8 (5)  no effect 0 (0)

7. Most likely causes for the lack of homework completion at middle school:

| | |
|---|---|
| lack of parent involvement | 20 (9) |
| inappropriate assignment (too hard, boring, unclear directions) | 1 (1) |
| outside distractions | 13 (6) |
| lack of organization | 25 (10) |
| lack of study skills | 13 (5) |
| lack of supplies, place | 2 (0) |
| lack of motivation | 22 (20) |

8. What techniques do you use to correct the problem:

| | |
|---|---|
| late slips | 8 (0) |
| homework club | 14 (0) |
| parent calls | 32 (19) |
| detentions | 5 (0) |
| others (list): | 5 (3) |

- loss of activities
- talk to student
- after school help
- time out lunch
- help with organization
- loss of points
- positive incentive
- contracts
- lower grade

9. How supportive were parents in your attempt to correct the problem?

| | |
|---|---|
| very supportive | 19 (14) |
| minimally supportive | 14 (8) |
| not very supportive | 1 (0) |

10. Do you take individual learning styles into consideration when assigning homework?

yes 18 (15)  no 4 (8)

## Appendix E

## Late Assignment Slip

STUDENT:____________________ TEACHER:____________ DATE:_____

SUBJECT: (check one)
Math______ Reading____ Social Studies______ Science____
Spelling____ Writing_____ Other______

ASSIGNMENT:(be specific)
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
_______

WHY WAS THE ASSIGNMENT NOT COMPLETED ON TIME? (be specific)
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
_______

The late work is attached, or I have verified that the reading assignment has been completed.

Parent Signature_____________________________ Date__________

**Please note - All late assignments will receive a 10% deduction.**

# Appendix F

## Teacher Interviews

Summary of interviews with Fifth Grade Teachers August, 1997

1. At the end of last year, you came to me and said that the most frustrating problem you encountered with your classes was a lack of homework completion. How prevalent was the problem? Was it just a few chronic kids or was it more widespread? How much instructional time was taken up dealing with the problem?

Teacher A:

*Every morning I would put up a list of names on the board for late or missing homework. 5 or 6 students' names were habitually on the board and one or two others would vary. I would then take time to chase papers down, have kids call for study hall, sign assignment books, check on homework contracts, etc. It seemed as if this took a lot of time each day.*

Teacher B:

*As the year went on the problem got worse and worse. There seemed to be a never ending "late list". Usually there were 6-8 kids who had chronic difficulties with late or missing work. Occasionally a few other students' names would appear, but that was mostly due to absences.*

2. How did the lack of homework completion affect the grades of the students involved? In your opinion, how did it affect their learning in general?

Teacher A:

*Grades were affected in two ways. If the students turned the homework in late, I deducted 5% points. If it wasn't turned in at all, the students received a 0%. Learning was greatly affected, especially with the math homework. By not doing the homework, they missed the guided practice so necessary to master math concepts. Once the kids got behind in a math concept, the problem just snowballed. They never seemed to catch up, and their tests were poor as well.*

Teacher B:

*I have to admit that I wasn't consistent about marking kids down a certain percentage for late work, so the late homework had some effect on the grades, but not a substantial one. I feel the late or missing homework really affected the learning because the kids were always playing catch-up. There were trying to do yesterday's late work and then*

Appendix F Continued

*the new assignments as well. Plus, often the late assignments that were turned in were a crummy quality.*

3. What were some of the techniques you used to try and correct the problem? How successful were they?

Teacher A:

*At the beginning of the year, I kept a record of missed assignments and sent notes home to parents. After four late or missing assignments, I had a parent meeting and put the students involved on homework contracts. This worked with one of my habitual problem students, but with the others it seemed to have little effect or just a temporary effect for as long as the contract was in effect. The key seemed to be parent support. Where the parent got involved and followed through there was improvement. Unfortunately some of the kids with the worst homework completion came from very dysfunctional family situations. With some of the worst offenders, I began to keep them after school until all the work was finished.*

Teacher B:

*At the beginning of the year I used a special plan in which I sent letters home every time an assignment was late. After four late assignments, I had a parent conference to work out a solution - usually a homework contract. Later in the year, I photocopied my list of late papers and kept it posted in the room on my filing cabinet as well as passing out a copy to each of the students involved. Then daily I would remind kids about the late and missing work. None of my techniques was really successful with those chronic kids.*

4. How successful do you think the study hall policy is in alleviating the problem?

Teacher A:

*I don't feel it is very successful at all. The same kids are in study hall all the time. It doesn't seem to make any difference to them or improve their homework completion.*

Teacher B:

*I don't feel it is very successful at all. The same kids are in study hall night after night. Nothing seems to change.*

Appendix F Continued

5. What do you think were the most likely causes for the lack of homework completion?

Teacher A:

*The family seems to be the biggest factor, but some other causes were the difficulty of the assignments for some at-risk kids, and a lack of organizational skills.*

Teacher B:

*Organization seems to be the biggest cause. The kids generally seemed to want to do well, but they just couldn't get it together. In a few cases, the problem was definitely home related. The parents didn't seem to understand how to set limits or structure or didn't accept the seriousness of the situation. And, in some cases, I really felt it was a matter of immaturity.*

6. How supportive were the parents in your attempts to correct the problem?

Teacher A:

*In general, most of the parents were supportive, but a few were totally ineffective.*

Teacher B:

*There were some parents who were very supportive, but some were not at all.*

7. About how much homework on the average did your students usually have a night?

Teacher A:

*I usually figure on about 45 minutes to an hour.*

Teacher B:

*I usually figure on about a half hour to an hour.*

Appendix F Continued

8. What types of usual homework assignments do you have?

Teacher A:

*There is usually a daily math assignment, nightly spelling study, a reading assignment from the novel literary group and about 3 times a week some social studies reading and accompanying study guide. In addition, there is usually a writing piece in process.*

Teacher B:

*There is usually a daily math assignment for most of the children. There's always a few who are able to complete the assignment in class. There's always reading homework, and usually a long term writing assignment. Less importantly, there is studying for the spelling test.*

9. What is your normal time and method of feedback on homework?

Teacher A:

*My policy is to return homework the next day with a graded %. I also try to include written feedback, especially on the writing papers. I go into great detail about the positive and negatives.*

Teacher B:

*I try to get tests back within two days. Unfortunately, the other work is usually returned in the weekly take-home folder. In the past I have tried to grade every assignment, but I'm re-evaluating that for this year. It's just too difficult for me to keep up with.*

10. Do you ever individualize or modify homework assignments? If so, how?

Teacher A:

*Yes, I often give the reteaching sheet in math, especially if kids haven't done well with the practice sheets. I also shorten assignments for some students. On longer and bigger projects I give choices based on multiple intelligences.*

Teacher B:

*Yes, I made a lot of modifications especially in length of assignment and on tests. I worked with the LD resource teacher for this, and she was terrific.*

Appendix G

Parent Involvement Tips

# Twelve Tips For Escaping the Homework Trap

- Don't give homework as a punishment.
- Don't give spur-of-the-moment homework assignments.
- Don't assume that because no questions are asked when you give the assignments students have no questions about their homework.
- Don't expect students (even your best ones) to always have their homework done.
- Understand that not all kinds of homework assignments are equally valuable for all students.
- Explain the purpose of every homework assignment.
- Acknowledge and be thankful for students' efforts to complete homework.
- Listen to what students say about their experiences with homework.
- Encourage students to involve their parents in their homework. Keep in mind that many parents do not have the skills to help, but would like to know what their child is learning.
- Offer to help students before and after school with homework unless the assignments are ones that can be completed independently.
- Don't confuse excuses for incomplete homework assignments with legitimate reasons.
- Make every effort to acknowledge completed homework assignments. Give credit for completion rather than grades. Have students grade their own homework whenever appropriate to maximize learning.

**Homework**
**Tips**
for Parents

## Set Up a Study Area

Tip #1

To do homework successfully, your child must have a place in which to work. The study area must be well-lit, quiet, and have all necessary supplies.

Help your child choose a location at home in which homework will be done. Even if your child does most homework at another location after school, there still should be a place in the home in which he or she can study.

Remember that your child does not need a lot of space to do homework. Either the kitchen table or a corner of the living room is fine, as long as it is quiet during homework time. Whenever possible, keep the study area off limits to brothers and sisters during homework time.

## Create a Homework Survival Kit

**PRAISE**

*your child when he or she does homework in the study area*

One of the keys to getting homework done is having supplies in one place. A Homework Survival Kit—containing supplies needed to do homework—will prevent your child from being distracted by the need to go searching for supplies, and will free you from last-minute trips to the store for folders, paper, tape and other needed items.

- If your child does homework at a location other than home (such as the library or an after-school care program) make sure that his or her homework supplies are available there.
- Respect your child's Homework Survival Kit. Don't use these supplies for other family needs.
- Give Homework Survival Kit materials as gifts. A dictionary, for example, is a special present that a child will use over and over again.

Tip #2

Appendix G Continued

# Homework Tips for Parents

1. Ask about homework each day, even if there is none. Asking conveys interest and caring about your child and school work.

2. If/when homework is forgotten, encourage contacting classmates or Homework Hotline so that work can be completed. If no help is available, be certain that your child suffers the logical consequences.

3. Provide a quiet family time each day so that children are encouraged to do homework or read. Modeling quiet time will help establish reading and/or homework as a habit.

4. Tell your child that you expect him/her to complete the homework independently; however, you will be happy to check it or provide help if there is a problem. If you are unable to help, encourage calling a friend or as a last resort, the teacher, for clarification/help.

5. Establish a place where completed homework and/or other items which are needed for school can be kept safe and visible for the next school day.

6. Become actively involved in homework when teachers have asked for family input/interaction.

7. Provide study/homework supplies and have them in a place where they are easily accessible so valuable study time is not wasted on searching for a pencil, paper, etc.

8. Praise and encourage your child for homework and study efforts.

# Schedule Daily Homework Time

Tip #3

Help your child develop good homework habits by encouraging him or her to start homework at the same time each day. By scheduling Daily Homework Time, you will not only help your child get work done on time, but you can also ensure that homework is done at a time when you are available to assist your child.

Daily Homework Time is a time set aside each day during which your child must do homework. During Daily Homework Time all other activities must stop; your child must go to his or her study area and get to work.

**Here's how to introduce Daily Homework Time:**

1 Tell your child that homework is to be done at the same time each day, during Daily Homework Time.

2 Help your child determine the length of time needed each day for homework.

3 Have your child write down his scheduled after-school activities and responsibilities in the designated spaces on the Daily Schedule.

4 Encourage your child to identify his or her best time for doing homework. (Example: right after school vs right after dinner) Then tell your child to determine the best time period each day to be set aside for Daily Homework Time.

5 Have your child write the Daily Homework Time in the spaces shown on the Daily Schedule.

6 Check your child's completed Daily Schedule for accuracy. Make sure that the homework times chosen are appropriate.

7 Post the Daily Schedule in a prominent location. Encourage your child to stick to the schedule!

**PRAISE**

*your child when homework is completed during Daily Homework Time*

Grades 4-6
**Homework Tips**
for Parents

Tip #4

# Encourage your child to work independently.

Homework teaches children responsibility. Through homework, children learn skills they must develop if they are to grow to be independent, motivated, and successful adults: how to follow directions, how to begin and complete a task, and how to manage time. By encouraging your child to work on his or her own, you are helping develop these important life skills.

**Follow these guidelines:**

- Check to see that your child is doing homework at the proper time.
- Suggest that your child call a friend if help is needed.
- Give your child help only if a real effort has been made to do the work.

**PRAISE**

*your child when he or she does homework independently. Let your child know how proud you are!*

Grades 4-6

**Homework Tips**

for Parents

Tip #5

# Motivate Your Child with Praise

Children need encouragement and support from the people whose opinions they value the most—their parents. Your consistent praise can increase your child's self-confidence and motivate him or her to do the best work possible.

**Try these ideas:**

- Each night praise your child about some specific accomplishment, for example, "I really like how you have been completing your homework each night."

- Use **Super Praise** to motivate your child.

  **First**, one parent praises the child: "I really appreciate how hard you're working to do your homework. You finished it all and you did such a great job. I want to make sure Dad hears about this."

  **Second**, this parent praises the child in front of the other parent: "Amanda did a really wonderful job on her homework today. She started it without complaining, she stayed with it, and she did a super job on it."

  **Finally**, the other person praises the child: "I really feel proud of you, getting such a good report from Mom. You're really doing fine!"

If you're a single parent, you can use a grandparent, a neighbor, or a family friend as your partner in delivering Super Praise. Any adult whose approval your child will value can fill the role of the second person offering praise.

## Solving Homework Problems

**For the parent(s) of________________________**

From time to time your child may forget to bring home books or homework assignments. But when he or she continually fails to bring home assigned homework, you must take action.

### Here's what to do when your child fails to bring assignments home:

1 **State clearly that you expect all homework assignments to be brought home.**
Tell your child, "I expect you to bring home all your assigned work and all the books you need to complete your assignments. If you finish your homework during free time at school, I expect you to bring it home so that I can see it."

2 **Work with the teacher(s) to make sure you know what homework has been assigned.**
Students should be writing all homework assignments down on a weekly assignment sheet. Ask your child's teacher(s) to check and sign the assignment sheet at the end of class. When your child completes the assignments, you sign the sheet and have your child return it to the teacher.

3 **Provide praise and support when all homework assignments are brought home.**
Make sure that your child knows that you appreciate it every time he or she brings home all homework assignments. "It's great to see that you remembered to bring home all of your homework. I knew you could do it."

4 **Institute Mandatory Homework Time.**
If your child still fails to bring home assignments, he or she may be avoiding homework in favor of spending time with friends or watching TV. Mandatory Homework Time eliminates the advantages of forgetting homework.

(continued)

Mandatory Homework Time means that your child must spend a specific amount of time on academic activities whether homework is brought home or not. In other words, if one hour (or two) is allotted each night for homework, the entire time must be spent on academic work such as reading, or reviewing textbooks or class notes. When students learn that their irresponsible approach to homework will not be rewarded with more free time, they will quickly learn to remember to bring home their assignments.

5 **Use a Homework Contract.**

A Homework Contract is an effective motivator for young people of any age. A Homework Contract is an agreement between you and your child that states: "When you do your homework, you will earn a reward." For example: "Each day that you bring home your homework and complete it appropriately, you will earn one point. When you have earned five points (or ten points) you will earn a special privilege." (The younger the child, the more quickly he or she should be able to earn the reward.)

6 **Work with the teacher to follow through at school for homework not completed.**

If your child continues to forget homework, discuss with the teacher the possibility of imposing loss of privileges at school. Loss of lunch time, or assigning after-school detention lets your child know that you and the school are working together to ensure that he or she behaves responsibly.

Your child must learn to bring home and complete all homework assignments. Accept no excuses.

Appendix G Continued

## EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

**T**ake the time to be an active listener

**E**ducate children to become mature, responsible, thinking members of the community

**A**sk questions to encourage critical thinking

**C**hallenge all students to their full potential

**H**elp students learn to collaborate, cooperate, and compromise within the classroom community

**E**nvelope students in a warm, caring atmosphere where students are free to take educational risks

**R**aise students in a responsibility centered classroom where students are involved in their own learning

**S**et a special time and place for home learning

**T**hink about and make connections between school and "real life"

**U**se an assignment notebook faithfully

**D**on't give excuses or expect others to do the thinking

**E**xpect and give the very best effort

**N**eed help? Ask!

**T**reat learning as a privilege and a special opportunity

**P**articipate by assisting with home learning, talking about school progress, and volunteering when possible

**A**ccentuate the positive

**R**einforce the importance of learning

**E**xpect the very best at all times

**N**ever let a day go by without saying "I love you!"

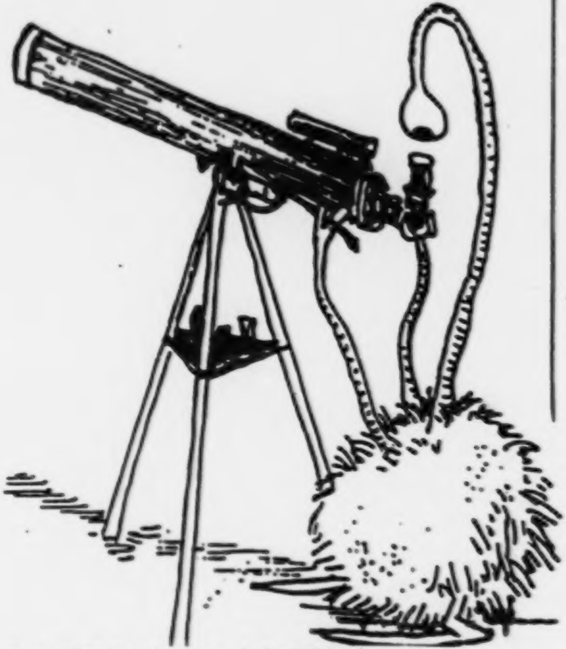
**T**urn off the television during home learning, reading time, and special family times

Appendix H

Learning Styles Inventory

# FOCUS ON LEARNING STYLES

1. Know how you learn.
2. Combine HOW and WHY with WHAT you learn.
3. Be aware of the time and environment where you learn best.
4. Apply various learning activities to meet your needs.
5. Utilize all your senses in learning anything.
6. Apply how you learn to all new situations.
7. Be flexible in your thinking and learning.
8. Intentionally decide which modality to use.
9. Analyze your teacher's teaching style and use appropriate learning strategies.
10. Creatively adapt materials to best fit your learning strengths.



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Appendix H Continued

# CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING STYLES

Three of your five senses are primarily used in learning, storing, remembering and recalling information. Your eyes, ears and sense of touch play essential roles in the way you communicate, perceive reality and relate to others. Because you learn from and communicate best with someone who shares your dominant modality, it is a great advantage for you to know the characteristics of visual, auditory and kinesthetic learning styles and to be able to identify them in others.

**VISUAL**

mind sometimes strays during verbal activities
observes rather than talks or acts
organized in approach to tasks
likes to read
usually a good speller
memorizes by seeing graphics & pictures
not too distractible
finds verbal instructions difficult
has good handwriting
remembers faces
uses advanced planning
doodles
quiet by nature
meticulous, neat in appearance
notices details

**AUDITORY**

talks to self aloud
enjoys talking
easily distracted
has more difficulty with written directions
likes to be read to
memorizes by steps in a sequence
enjoys music
whispers to self while reading
remembers faces
easily distracted by noises
hums or sings
outgoing by nature
enjoys listening activities

**KINESTHETIC**

likes physical rewards
in motion most of the time
likes to touch people when talking to them
taps pencil or foot while studying
enjoys doing activities
reading is not a priority
poor speller
likes to solve problems by physically working through them
will try new things
outgoing by nature; expresses emotions through physical means
uses hands while talking
dresses for comfort
enjoys handling objects

- Students who have equal modality preferences are more flexible learners and are already using many studying techniques rather than just a few.

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# Appendix I

## Metacognitive Questions

1. How much time did you spend on your homework?

2. Which of your assignments do you think helped you the most? Why?

3. Which of your assignments were not very helpful? Why?

4. If you had late assignments this week, what were the reason(s) why?

5. What seems to be the most helpful to you in completing your homework well and on time? (for example: assignment book, set homework time and place, parent involvement)

6. Did you get enough feed back on your homework? If not, which particular assignment(s) did you need more?

7. Is there anything I can do to help you be more successful?

8. What homework assignments helped you do well on this test?

9. How would you change the way you completed your homework assignments to better prepare for the next test?

10. What did you need to study more before this test?

11. How would you change the way you studied to better prepare for the next test?

12. What has been the most difficult aspect of doing a research paper?

13. What has been the easiest aspect of doing a research paper?

14. What do you need help with in order to be successful with a research paper?

15. What purposes, if any, do you see in doing a research paper?

# Appendix J

## Journal Page

Week of ___________

Actions Taken:

Reflection:

| PLUSES (+) | MINUSES (-) | INTERESTING (?) |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

Comments, Notes (Continued on back, as needed)

Appendix K

Newsletter

# memo: 6-B Bombers

December 4, 1997

It's hard to believe we're already half way through the 2nd quarter! Attached you will find your child's **Progress Reports**. If they have a D or F grade in any subject area, please sign the Progress Report indicating you have seen these grades. The students will have until 12/19 to complete and turn in any missing assignments along with a late slip.

**Homework Hotline** is available for your use. Dial **375-3111** and follow the instructions to hear each day's assignments and special information for Team 6-B. We hope you will take advantage of this helpful feature at

We have also included additional information to help you aid your child in homework completion.

A reminder: **Internet** forms need to be turned in indicating whether your child may or may not use the Internet in the classroom. Please sign these forms and have your child return them to their first period teacher.

Any **questions** for the 6-B teachers??? Call after 1:00 P.M.

Thank you for your help and support.

## Appendix L

## Parent Project Letter

November 18, 1997

Dear Parents,

Starting Monday, November 24th, and continuing through December our sixth grade classes will be working on expository research essays. Just the thought of a research paper is usually enough to make parents and children shudder. In order to lower everyone's anxiety level, we want to give you as much information as we can about the scope, requirements, timing, and grading of this paper.

The objective of this assignment is to teach children how to research and how to organize the information they have gathered into a cohesive, multi-paragraph, expository essay. The paper should have an introduction, 3-5 well-developed body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Usually the paper is at least two pages long, handwritten. Students may type or word process the paper as long as they do the actual typing. At least three different sources should be used to write the paper, and a completed bibliography will be turned in with the final essay.

Because this is a large project, we have divided it into distinct, manageable parts that we will be teaching as we go along. These parts include: locating and researching information, taking notes, outlining to organize the paper, rough drafting and peer conferencing, making content and editing revisions, completing the final copy with a bibliography, and presenting the information at a special Celebrations Around the World Fair on Friday, December 19th. For the Fair we will be doing some special art and mapping activities in class.

One of the biggest problems children face with a major task like this is completing it on time. It is very tempting to procrastinate and not uncommon to have students trying to research, draft, revise, and produce a final copy the night before the paper is due. On top of that, they may just tell you at 10:00 p.m. that they need three soda breads by tomorrow morning! This is guaranteed to give parents ulcers! To help the children move at a realistic and appropriate pace, we have set deadlines for each portion of the project. Your child will have a checklist including requirements and due dates. We have attached a copy of the actual writing prompt and the checklist so that you are aware of the deadlines for each part of the assignment.

Parents often ask teachers what their role should be in an assignment like this. We see the parents' role mainly to be a supportive one. Please help your child get to the library for materials. Let your child know that you are interested in how he or she is doing. Keep track of the checklist and whether your child is staying up to date on the different parts of the assignment. Encourage your child to read his or her rough draft to you and ask questions about parts that are confusing. You can even be an "editor" if you like, pointing out spelling and punctuation errors. We ask, though, that you **do not do** the correcting. We would suggest just circling spelling mistakes or making marks in the margins of lines that contain punctuation errors. Then let your child find and correct them. We would ask that you do not help your child compose the paper. The skills involved are important ones for sixth graders to master. We will be teaching the skills necessary for completing this assignment. We feel confident your child is capable and ready academically to tackle this project.

As a final celebration of all of our hard work, we will be having a Celebrations Around the World Fair in the gym on Friday morning, December 19th, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Of course, you are invited to attend during this time. After the Fair, the sixth graders will be eating lunch in the rooms to sample the foods from each celebration so we are asking the children to bring in enough of their food to share with the classes. Since there will be 54 children, small portions are appropriate. This is another day when we could really use parental help. We need several parents to help warm up and set out the foods for the luncheon. If you would be available on Friday, December 19th, from about 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., we could really use your help.

So that we know you have received this letter and information, we would ask that you sign and return the bottom portion of the checklist page. If you have any questions about this project, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Bacon

## Appendix M

## BUILD Science Lesson

Name ________________________
Date ____________ Period ______

# Solubility Labs

GROUP 1
PURPOSE: To determine how **temperature** affects a solid in solution.

### **TEMPERATURE** AND SOLUBILITY OF A **SOLID**

(p. 161 steps 5-6)

| Cup Number | Temperature | Time (seconds) |
|---|---|---|
| Cup 1 | 1 tsp. sugar &<br>100 ml HOT water | |
| Cup 2 | 1 tsp. sugar &<br>100 ml COLD water | |

GROUP 2
PURPOSE: To determine how **stirring** affects a solid in solution

### **STIRRING** AND SOLUBILITY OF A **SOLID**

(p. 161 steps 1-4)

| Cup Number | Stirring | Time (seconds) |
|---|---|---|
| Cup 1 | 1 tsp. sugar &<br>100 ml water<br>NO stirring | |
| Cup 2 | 1 tsp. sugar &<br>100 ml water<br>STIRRING | |

## Appendix M Continued

GROUP 3
PURPOSE: To determine how **temperature** affects a gas in solution.

### **TEMPERATURE** AND SOLUBILITY OF A **GAS**
(p. 163-164)

| Cup Number | Temperature | Observations |
|---|---|---|
| Cup 1 | Cup of soda placed in 50 ml HOT water | |
| Cup 2 | Cup of soda placed in 50 ml COLD water | |

GROUP 4
PURPOSE: To determine how **stirring** affects a gas in solution.

### **STIRRING** AND SOLUBILITY OF A **GAS**
(p. 163-164)

| Cup Number | Stirring | Observations |
|---|---|---|
| Cup 1 | Cup of soda & NO stirring | |
| Cup 2 | Cup of soda & STIRRING | |

GROUP 5
PURPOSE: To determine how the **solvent** affects the solubility of the solute.

### **SOLVENT** AND SOLUBILITY

| Solvent | Observations of chalk |
|---|---|
| 20 ml WATER to cover the chalk | |
| 20 ml ACETONE to cover the chalk | |
| 20 ml ALCOHOL to cover the chalk | |

GROUP 6
PURPOSE: To determine how the amount of **solvent** affects solubility.

### **AMOUNT OF SOLVENT** AND SOLUBILITY OF A **SOLID**
(p. 165)

| Cup Number | Amount | Time (seconds) |
|---|---|---|
| Cup 1 | 1 tsp sugar &<br>100 ml water | |
| Cup 2 | 1 tsp sugar &<br>25 ml water | |

(Stir if needed)

GROUP 7
PURPOSE: To determine if the solubility of **solutes** is the same.

### **SOLUTE** AND SOLUBILITY OF A **SOLID**
(p. 165)

| Cup Number | Solute | Time (seconds) |
|---|---|---|
| Cup 1 | 50 g. SUGAR &<br>100 ml water | |
| Cup 2 | 50 g. SALT &<br>100 ml water | |

(Stir if needed)

## Appendix M Continued

CONCLUSION QUESTIONS:

Answer these questions in **complete** sentence

1. How does **particle size** affect the rate (time) at which the sugar dissolves in water?________________________________________

2. How does **temperature** affect the rate at which sugar dissolves in water?

3. How does **stirring** affect the rate at which sugar dissolves in water?

4. If you like a lot of bubbles in your soda, should you **stir** your pop? Why?

5. If you like a lot of bubbles in your soda, should you drink it **cold** or **warm**? Why?

6. Do different **solvents** dissolve a solute equally? Explain.

7. Which solvent dissolved the most chalk? ______________________________

8. How does adding **more solvent** change the amount of solute that dissolves?

9. Do all **solutes** dissolve the same amount? ______ Which dissolves the most in water, salt or sugar? ____________________________________

10. If you want to dissolve a solute quickly, list 3 things that would help you.

# Appendix N

## Cooperative Learning Literature Circle

Novel: *The Mummy, the Will and the Crypt* by John Bellairs

## GROUP ROLES

CHECKER/ENCOURAGER **(In 4 member groups one person fulfills both of these jobs. In 5 member groups, these roles are to be separated.)**

Checks all stenos for completeness. Each member should have written down one or two main events to add to the story map and two vocabulary words. The two vocabulary entries should include the page number, definition, and a sentence either from the book or made up by the group member.

Reports to the teacher any group member who has an incomplete assignment.

Encourages the group with relevant questions and compliments to keep ideas flowing and the group cooperating.

CONSENSUS FACILITATOR

Makes sure that all members of the group share the event they chose for the story map and support their choice with logical reasons. When necessary, utilizes 5 to fist strategy to identify the event the group is satisfied as a whole to add to the group map. Makes sure that ideas are discussed and not people.

VOCABULARY FACILITATOR

Makes sure that the vocabulary is shared and written down by everyone in the group and that each member of the group understands the meaning of the words. Checks on accuracy of definitions according to the context of the novel.

OBSERVER/RECORDER

Completes tally chart of group behaviors and interactions.

Records on group story map the event agreed upon by the group.

Shares results of tally at end of group discussion.

ROLES ARE TO BE ROTATED EVERY DAY THE GROUP MEETS UNTIL ALL GROUP MEMBERS HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO FULFILL EVERY ROLE, THEN REPEAT.

# Appendix O

## Egypt Multiple Intelligences Unit

October 28, 1997

Dear Parents,

Last week we started our study of Ancient Egyptian culture. With its pyramids, pharaohs, and unique religion, the Egypt unit is usually a favorite with the sixth graders. As part of the unit, your child will need to complete a project or activity which will count the equivalent of a test grade. Because I believe in choices and student responsibility, I have divided the projects into A, B, or C categories with several projects to chose from in each level. I have designed the choices with different learning styles in mind, and I am confident that the students can find one that they will enjoy as well as learn from. For each project that requires a creative product such as the mummy or the diorama of the Plain of Giza, I have developed a grading rubric so that the children will know how their project will be evaluated before beginning. The projects are due Monday, November 10th or earlier if finished.

I wanted you to be aware of one very important grading requirement, and that is "Ownership." I will be asking the students to have you evaluate and initial on the form how much of the work was actually completed by the student. I know that the students might need help with planning or shopping for materials, but the actual construction and implementation of the project should be theirs as much as possible.

Once your child has selected a project, I would suggest that you go over the grading rubric and discuss together what is required and what is feasible for your family situation. Although the ultimate decision should rest with the student, your input and perceptions are important.

I'm looking forward to seeing the completed projects. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any further information. Thanks for your help and support.

Mrs. Linda Bacon

NAME: EVALUATOR: (check one) Self Teacher Points earned:

## EGYPT UNIT RUBRIC

| CRITERIA | BURIED IN SAND - 1 | COVERED WITH ROCKS - 2 | STEP PYRAMID - 3 | GREAT PYRAMID - 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| OWNERSHIP | SOMEONE OTHER THAN THE STUDENT DID MOST OF THE WORK | STUDENT DID AT LEAST HALF THE WORK | STUDENT DID AT LEAST 3/4 OF THE WORK | STUDENT DID ALL OF THE WORK |
| PRODUCT | CORRECT MATERIALS USED: RECOGNIZABLE AS THE SHAPE OF A PERSON | CORRECT MATERIALS USED: BODY IS WRAPPED IN SEVERAL LAYERS | CORRECT MATERIALS USED: BODY IS WRAPPED IN SEVERAL LAYERS AND IN PROPORTION | CORRECT MATERIALS USED: MUMMY SHAPE IS WELL DEFINED AND PROPORTIONED |
| DECORATION | ENTIRE MUMMY IS PAINTED | MUMMY IS PAINTED WITH EQYPTIAN COLORS | MUMMY IS PAINTED WITH EGYPTIAN COLORS AND MOTIFS TO RESEMBLE A REAL MUMMY | MUMMY IS PAINTED TO RESEMBLE A REAL MUMMY WITH A DEATH MASK |
| EYE APPEAL | RATES ONLY A PASSING GLANCE | WORTH A SECOND LOOK | REALLY MAKES ONE STOP TO APPRECIATE | READY FOR A WINDOW DISPLAY |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| OPTIONAL FOR 5 EXTRA CREDIT POINTS | MUMMY INSIDE SARCOPHOGUS | MUMMY DISPLAYED WITH TOMB LIKE OBJECTS | MUMMY DISPLAYED WITH CHART OF PROCESS OF MUMMIFICATION | YOUR CHOICE - GET APPROVAL |

POINTS: OWNERSHIP X 10 PRODUCT X 5 DECORATION X 5 EYE APPEAL X 5

TOTAL: 100 PT.

# Appendix P

## Graphic Organizer

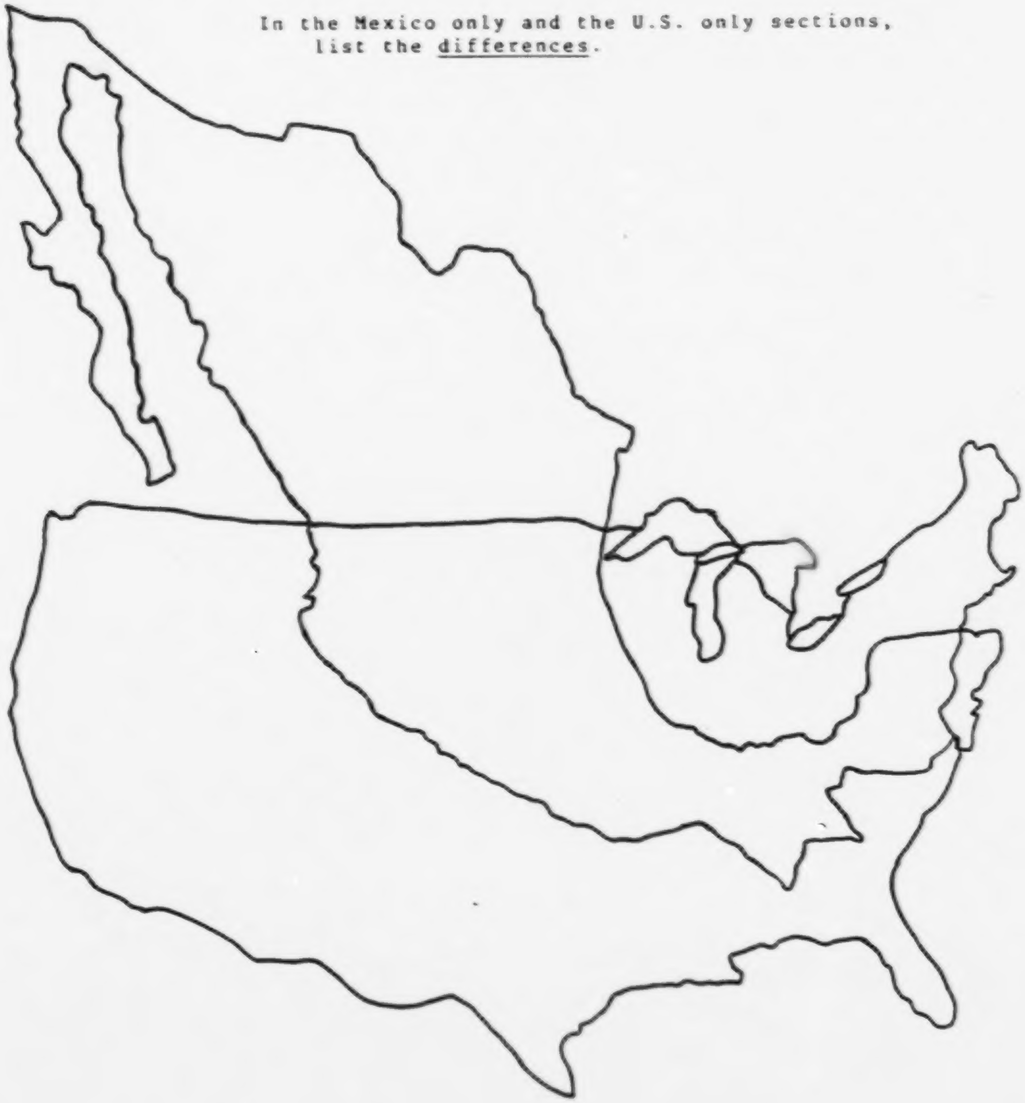
Spanish I
Capítulo 2 - culture p. 68

Nombre ______________________________

State the similarities and differences between Mexican and American schools.

Where both countries overlap, list the similarities.

In the Mexico only and the U.S. only sections, list the differences.



# Appendix Q

## Student Homework Survey - January

In order for this school year to be as successful as it can be, I would like information about your homework habits. Please be as accurate as possible in your answers.

CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1. How much time per night do you spend on homework?

| ☐ less than 1/2 hr. | ☐ 1/2 to 1 hr. | ☐ 1 to 1 1/2 hrs. | ☐ 1 1/2 to 2 hrs. | ☐ more than 2 hrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: 5 | Site A: 22 | Site A: 24 | Site A: 17 | Site A: 5 |
| Site B: 1 | Site B: 17 | Site B: 5 | Site B: 3 | Site B: 1 |
| Site C: 4 | Site C: 7 | Site C: 4 | Site C: 1 | Site C: 1 |

2. In how many subjects per night do you usually have homework?

| ☐ 0-1 | ☐ 2-3 | ☐ 4-5 | ☐ 6-7 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site A: 0 | Site A: 36 | Site A: 37 | Site A: 0 |
| Site B: 3 | Site B: 17 | Site B: 7 | Site B: 0 |
| Site C: 1 | Site C: 11 | Site C: 5 | Site C: 0 |

FOR THE QUESTIONS BELOW USE THE FOLLOWING RATING SCALE:

| | | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. How often do you use your assignment notebook? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 58 | 6 | 7 | 2 |
| | Site B: | 17 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| | Site C: | 7 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| 4. How often do your parents ask to see your homework? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 4 | 26 | 26 | 17 |
| | Site B: | 4 | 7 | 10 | 6 |
| | Site C: | 0 | 0 | 4 | 13 |
| 5. How often do your parents help you with your homework? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 8 | 24 | 34 | 7 |
| | Site B: | 1 | 8 | 16 | 2 |
| | Site C: | 0 | 3 | 9 | 5 |

## Appendix Q Continued

| | | Almost Always | Often | Seldom | Never |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. How often do you have the necessary supplies to complete your homework? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 43 | 29 | 0 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 18 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 5 | 10 | 2 | 0 |
| 7. How often do you do your homework at the same time every day? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 28 | 28 | 13 | 4 |
| | Site B: | 7 | 6 | 13 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 2 | 9 | 6 | 0 |
| 8. How often do you do your homework in the same place every day? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 36 | 22 | 13 | 2 |
| | Site B: | 13 | 10 | 4 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 4 | 10 | 3 | 0 |
| 9. How often do you feel you have clear directions for your homework? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 14 | 44 | 12 | 3 |
| | Site B: | 10 | 14 | 2 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 5 | 10 | 2 | 0 |
| 10. How often do you use the time given in class to work on homework? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 41 | 23 | 6 | 3 |
| | Site B: | 15 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 12 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| 11. How often do you complete **all** of your homework? | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 46 | 20 | 6 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 20 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 10 | 7 | 0 | 0 |

**FOR THE STATEMENTS BELOW USE THE FOLLOWING RATING SCALE:**

| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Completing my homework is important. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 50 | 20 | 2 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 24 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 6 | 11 | 0 | 0 |

## Appendix Q Continued

| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. The amount of time I spend on homework is sufficient. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 25 | 39 | 7 | 2 |
| | Site B: | 7 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 2 | 13 | 2 | 0 |
| 14. The homework I have is usually too difficult for me. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 4 | 3 | 55 | 11 |
| | Site B: | 0 | 3 | 16 | 8 |
| | Site C: | 0 | 1 | 12 | 4 |
| 15. The homework I have is usually challenging enough for me. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 18 | 42 | 10 | 3 |
| | Site B: | 5 | 19 | 1 | 2 |
| | Site C: | 1 | 11 | 5 | 0 |
| 16. I have too much homework. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 17 | 27 | 25 | 4 |
| | Site B: | 8 | 9 | 7 | 3 |
| | Site C: | 5 | 4 | 8 | 0 |
| 17. Homework has a purpose and is not busywork. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 19 | 38 | 8 | 8 |
| | Site B: | 6 | 14 | 6 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 3 | 9 | 4 | 1 |
| 18. My teacher should give me feedback on my homework. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 32 | 35 | 5 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 14 | 10 | 2 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 10 | 5 | 2 | 0 |
| 19. If I spent more time on homework my grades would improve. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 34 | 24 | 13 | 2 |
| | Site B: | 13 | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| | Site C: | 7 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 20. Completing my homework makes me more prepared for class activities. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 37 | 27 | 5 | 4 |
| | Site B: | 14 | 10 | 3 | 0 |
| | Site C: | 6 | 10 | 1 | 0 |

## Appendix Q Continued

| | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. I have good study skills. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 21 | 36 | 15 | 1 |
| | Site B: | 5 | 15 | 5 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 2 | 11 | 4 | 0 |
| 22. I have the organizational skills to complete my homework. | | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Site A: | 28 | 36 | 6 | 3 |
| | Site B: | 8 | 15 | 2 | 1 |
| | Site C: | 4 | 11 | 2 | 0 |

23. Which of the following activities regularly take priority over homework time? (Check all that apply)

☐ athletics
Site A: 35
Site B: 17
Site C: 10

☐ church
Site A: 15
Site B: 5
Site C: 2

☐ computer
Site A: 23
Site B: 6
Site C: 4

☐ family
Site A: 30
Site B: 18
Site C: 10

☐ friends
Site A: 44
Site B: 14
Site C: 10

☐ jobs
Site A: 11
Site B: 6
Site C: 7

☐ music
Site A: 33
Site B: 14
Site C: 5

☐ phone
Site A: 27
Site B: 9
Site C: 6

☐ television
Site A: 43
Site B: 11
Site C: 7

☐ other
Site A: 26
Site B: 3
Site C: 6

Thank you!